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OTHER FOLK.

BY

MISS JENNIE M. DRINKWATER.

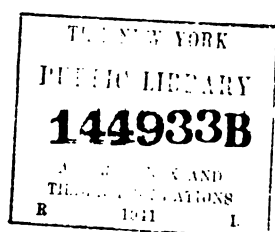
In Consequence

"THE WORLD IS SO FULL OF OTHER FOLK."



BOSTON:
BRADLEY AND WOODRUFF.

1875



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TO

All the Girls

WHO HAVE WRITTEN TO ME.





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OTHER FOLK.

L

HER CHOICE.

"God make my life a little song,
That comforteth the sad ;
That helpeth others to be strong,
And makes the singer glad."

"SOME people seem to have a choice in their lives. I have seen girls, I see them every day, where I would be, and doing what I would."

Olive Vanema spoke bitterly. She was not sweet ; her mother told her so every time she was out of patience with her.

It was her seventeenth birthday ; her mother had been ill all night and kept her awake ; an hour before the clock struck six she fell asleep—oh, how wearily !

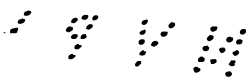
When the clock struck its six warning strokes the dulled ears heard no sound; at five minutes past six her father's voice called her roughly. He must have his strong, hot coffee at seven, and he had heard no sound in the chamber above his head.

It was raining, a chilly rain, and she must go to school, seven blocks, without rubbers, and her books had not been opened last night because of her mother, and her head was so dizzy!

No one would care that it was her birthday. If God cared, would He give her a birthday present?

No one had cared all day.

In the evening Mr. Provost called to see her father; he always asked to see her father as though he cared to see no one else; but perhaps he was thus pointed because it was hard to see her father alone in such a small house. Her mother's bedroom opened out of the parlor, and down-stairs were the cellar and a room she used as a kitchen—she supposed it was a part of the cellar—and over the parlor were *her* sleeping room and one other room they rented to an old man who lived by himself and was his own housekeeper. Her uncle had advised them to let the old man have this room, to lessen the rent; Olive took his advice because



he paid the rent, but it was only until she should be out of school; then she would have a larger house to breathe in, and no strange tread should make the house unhomelike. As Mr. Provost went out, after half an hour's talk with her father, she met him in the hall; she was bringing up-stairs her mother's supper—tea and toast and lemon-jelly.

She had been crying—oh, the things she had been crying about!

She did not remember, when she thought over the conversation afterward, how she came to say to him, a stranger, whom she associated with her uncle, (and that in itself spoiled her pleasure in his genial manner and fine appearance) that she had no choice in her life. She had been thinking it all day; it must have spoken itself.

"You do have a choice," in insisted.

"Not my own choice."

"Whose choice have you then?"

He was standing with his hat in his hand; his dripping umbrella he left on the stoop.

"My father's, I suppose, and my mother's."

She spoke hopelessly; she was too weary to care now what she said.

"Poor child," he murmured.

He had a little girl at home, a little girl with no mother; he was sorry for this girl with a mother and with the father he had been talking with half an hour.

The father refused a situation offered him through his brother, the uncle Olive did not like, for the single reason that it was not "quite up to the work I have been accustomed to, you know."

Mr. Provost looked down at this girl, who, when her school-days were over, would be glad to accept any situation to give bread and luxuries to her invalid mother and idle, weak-willed father.

There was strength in her face, and truth and steadfastness in the eyes that were turned from him because of tears of which she was ashamed.

"I am rebellious. I'm not one bit good to-day. I was furious this morning when father called me. It was another girl's seventeenth birthday and her father gave her a watch and her mother wrote her the sweetest poem. I don't care for the watch or the poem; I only wanted somebody to be glad."

"Don't you know of any one who is glad?"

"No."

"Aren't you glad yourself?"

The sobs were kept resolutely back. Her mother's tea would be cold, and she would fret and call her slow and stupid; but she wanted somebody to know how hard and sad and bad the day had been. She knew how he loved his own little girl.

"What do you want all your life—most?"

"Oh, so many things; I want them all—most."

"Do you know what God wants all your life most?"

"No."

It was strange that He wanted anything out of her life.

"Would you like to know?"

"Yes," with a quick sob of longing.

Only last Sunday she had "confessed Christ." She loved to think of it that way. But she did not know what He wanted most for her to do—or be, or have—that is, if He cared for her to have anything but disappointment.

"I do not know in any special way; you know better than I can tell you the one way—but I am sure of this, He has something special for you to do. He is training you that He may trust you with His work. You are having unusual training. He shows you what He thinks of you by giving it to

you; it may grow harder as each birthday comes, I think it will. If you want His work, you must accept his will; you cannot have one without the other. Repeat that; I want to be sure that you understand."

"If I want His work I must accept His will."

In the modulation of her tones he saw how much it was to her.

"Do you want His work?"

"Yes," with a flashing look towards him. "I want it—most."

"Then you want His will—most?"

"Yes," without any hesitation.

"His will for you is what He chooses for you, and then the work of the Lord shall prosper *in your hand*."

This time she made no answer; she was thinking that His will was as hard as it could be.

"Good night," he said cheerily.

He opened the door and took up his dripping umbrella. She tasted the tea; it was cold.

She hastened down to her little cellar kitchen and poured fresh tea into the cup; she was sorry the other tea was wasted; but she could drink it herself sometime.

That night she wrote the words he asked her to repeat in the back of her Geometry.

On her next birthday she found the words, and on the next and the next; she cut out the leaf, she wished to have the hurried, penciled writing, and folded it and kept it in her pocket-book.

When she was thirty-five, in nothing else did God seem so good to her, besides forgiving her sins, as in giving her work to do. She was so satisfied with it that it was like working in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Her will was flexible, bending as God's will bent it; as her will bent to Him, His work had bent to her, becoming not a part of herself, but herself, her only self.



II.

DIANTHA'S.

"The beauty and interest that we find in external objects must first exist in our own souls."

"Partaking of God's nature, we shall love all that God loves, and be interested in all in which He is interested."

—HUGH MACMILLAN.

GLANCING through the doorway Diantha saw the doctor stop on the door-stone to speak to Miss Vanema. With her work in her hand, she could not waste time in dropping it, she hurried out into the entry and was in time to hear his first words.

"A keen Frenchman who visited America made the remark that the chief defect in our educated young people was their perpetual self-contemplation."

"I know that it runs to evil among some of us older people," replied Miss Vanema. "I am a

firm believer in the truth that whatever we are we grow more so—and I am dreadfully afraid of becoming 'more so' in this sad particular."

Diantha stationed herself behind Miss Vanema's camp-chair, that she might hear the rest of it.

"I would rather know more about other folks than about myself," was the frank admission, so frankly given that the doctor joined in Miss Vanema's laugh.

The little woman behind the chair was made of interrogation points from head to foot; they bristled in the air about her every time she opened her lips.

Her favorite exclamation, "I want to know!" was the literal and exact truth. She always wanted to know, and she usually found out. The gentleman who quoted the keen Frenchman's remark about our educated young people lifted his hat, then stepped off the broad door-stone and went down the gravel walk to his carriage. He was the new doctor at Monroe; he called to see Diantha's mother two or three times a week; Diantha had decided, and told somebody (she always told somebody), that he liked to stop and speak to Miss Vanema; he never said such things to her. He seemed to be speaking in a different tongue when he talked to Miss Vanema.

How he happened to speak about the Frenchman she would like to know ; it seemed to be the continuation of something ; he was hitting Miss Vanema and her solitary and unsocial ways, she was sure, but it was a mistake to call her " young people ; " any person, even if he wasn't a doctor, couldn't make a mistake in her age. With that hair !

She was sure she had kept him.

Even the girls found there was something very keeping about her ; she had heard of people being *taking*—she smiled at her own humor in the play upon the word—but this woman was taking and keeping.

That was good enough to repeat, and she resolved to repeat it.

" Miss Vanema, you'll take cold out here."

" Oh, no," said Miss Vanema.

She was Miss Vanema to every one at Diantha's ; even her letters—the letters that Diantha happened to see—were addressed in this fashion, with no familiar first name or initials. She had been Miss Vanema so long that she was forgetting that she had ever been any one else ; the two who used to call her by the name she loved could never speak it now loud enough for her dull ear to catch the

sound. She knew they spoke it among themselves and to the Lord.

Diantha went back and picked up her work; as she sat sewing, straining her eyes over the buttonholes in Mollie's dress, for she would not acknowledge her fifty-one years by putting on glasses, she wanted to know all about Miss Vanema.

Miss Vanema was not straining her eyes over her fine printed page; she had slipped on her gold-rimmed eye-glasses. .

What were people *for*, Diantha asked herself, if not to let people know who they were and what they were; the Lord said you mustn't keep your light hidden, and wasn't yourself a part of your light?

What Miss Vanema was, was easily discoverable; she was the most eccentric old maid that she had ever seen, and there were seventeen of them between her house and Monroe; who she was, who knew?

She didn't belong to the Vanemas who made soap, or to the Vanemas who had a shipyard, for she had said so.

Nobody else had such a trick of evading questions; she would be angry at any body else and think they thought she meant to be inquisitive. It

wasn't queer that she wouldn't tell you the year she was born ; a woman's age was every woman's own secret.

All she liked people to know about dates in her private life was that she was married at seventeen. It was queer Miss Vanema wasn't married ; she was pretty enough—or had been ; she wasn't homely even now. Miss Vanema gave Diantha something more to live for ; she was "all beat out" with spring cleaning that day the carriage drove up from Monroe and the tall lady in brown inquired for Mrs. Van Der Zee, and said that she had been directed to her as some one who might take her to board for a month.

If she had not taken a fancy to her she would have refused ; but instantly she became curious about her. The guest chamber was in good order, Molly was not going to school, there was fresh bread in the house. Why yes, she answered, she might stay to supper now if she wanted to.

Miss Vanema wanted to

"It must be dreadful to have a secret and be hiding," Diantha said, after that first supper, to her sister Hannah. "Her face is as innocent as a baby's."

Hannah suggested that it might be a happy

secret. Diantha looked grim: that would not be worth finding out.

Every morning, as soon as it was warm enough, Miss Vanema took possession of that huge front door-stone; it faced the south, and she loved the south; she told herself that her ship was sailing in from the south.

Diantha had never seen any one sit out of doors as Miss Vanema did: she said to her after three days that she had never seen any one before who had time to do it; most folk's work was in the house.

That was another queer thing about her; there was scarcely any thing about her that wasn't queer.

Unconscious of the disturbance in the small world of Diantha's mind that she was creating and furnishing by being simply herself as she had been all her life, Olive Vanema closed her book, and with it in her hand, walked around the corner of the house.

"Going to the post-office!" snapped Diantha, biting off her thread. "Can't trust anybody else to get her letters!"

Every afternoon the mail brought something for Miss Vanema to think about; it was her only con-

nection with the world outside of herself; she had not yet grown familiar with the world at Diantha's. She went along the beaten path across the field, climbed a fence and stepped down a gravelly bank into the narrow road; this road was more like a lane than country roads usually are; after a stretch of the lane, she found another diverging path, this time through the woods, which opened on the railroad opposite the small station; at the station was her destination, the post-office.

This daily afternoon walk to the post-office was another of Diantha's grievances. Why should any well woman who had a life to live waste two hours every day in going to the post-office? Beside, it took hours of her time to read and answer so many letters; one morning on Miss Vanema's table she counted fifteen white envelopes, piled up and all stamped; it must take a great many stamps, too. And she was not rich; she could see how she had to count her dollars and cents. How many letters she brought from the mail she had not yet learned; her hands seemed always brimful. There must be plenty of other people somewhere who did nothing but board and write letters.

Diantha was not inquisitive, and would not break

a seal any sooner than she would burst into the church treasury, she would have told you, but the letter on the top bore a gentleman's name—not Vanema, either—and she could not help seeing that it was Rev. Harrison Provost, and then that one slipped off, and the next envelope was addressed to Miss Harriet Peters, and the third, that was a gentleman's name too—Andrew Croft. Diantha never forgot names.

A step in the hall prevented further innocent investigation, and she never knew whether or not the twelve remaining envelopes were masculine or feminine. These three were in different states—New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts.

The step in the hall was Miss Vanema's. Diantha opened the door to tell her that she came up to examine the covering of her lounge; if she stayed she must find prettier cretonne and cover it again for her. Miss Vanema did not say whether or not she would "stay."

Toward sunset on this afternoon in early May, Miss Vanema returned from her walk with her hands brimful as usual, but they were too heavily laden with pussy willow, the fringed blossoms of maple and the green buds of the lilac for Diantha's

alert eyes to discover the dozens of envelopes she was confident must be tucked away somewhere.

"This is all the spring I found," she said, holding up her full hands; "your springs are late."

"This is a late spring; that's why I warn you about sitting out of doors."

"Warnings never did me any good," replied Miss Vanema with a little laugh. "I have jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire many a time when I wanted to jump back into the frying-pan again."

"I stay in the frying-pan," reproved Diantha.

"Then you will never know what the fire is like," rejoined Miss Vanema, lightly.

"I know it burns."

"Yes, it burns!"

"I don't believe those green things are all you got."

"No, I got some sounds. The turtle, the frog and the lizard are about."

"How do you know one from the other, you city—woman."

"Girl" was on Diantha's lips, but she refrained; it would be an acknowledgment that she did not know her age.

"Oh I've read and been told; I spent one summer in the country when I was a girl, one happy summer."

"My summers have all been in the country! I'm sorry you took your walk for nothing."

"I did not. I never do any thing for nothing," Miss Vanema retorted, with a tantalizing brightening of the eyes.

"You don't seem to be homesick—away from so many friends, too," observed Diantha, watching her as she arranged the green things in her fingers.

"I am glad I do not seem to be," was the quiet reply.

"Come to supper, then," invited the hostess, with a slight asperity, feeling somehow baffled and thrown off; Miss Vanema's tone was as innocent as though she did not understand that she was questioned. Diantha had not thought of it before, but perhaps Miss Vanema was not very bright.

The letters Diantha's eyes did not discover were in Miss Vanema's pocket; three of them, each beckoning her different ways, and each giving excellent reasons for the differing ways.

And here she was, not only among strangers, but among such strangers!—heartsick at times, with a

homesickness for the home that was broken up; this place was as unfamiliar to her and its ways as foreign as a farmhouse in Sweden or Russia would be; and she had read about Sweden and Russia, but she had never read about Diantha's.

It was comical, she had smiled as she put it in her letters, but to herself she called her hostess what the neighborhood generally called her: Diantha. No other name seemed a part of her.

She was Di to her husband, Dianthy to her father and mother, and Dianth to her five sisters.

Miss Vanema could not think of the Lord speaking to her by any other name.

(Perhaps I should apologize for this thought of Miss Vanema's, but she had grown "queer," living so much inside of herself and with the Lord in His word; He was more to her than any other living being. This will help you understand without further explanation many of the things she said and did.)

After supper, with the three letters in her pocket, Miss Vanema went up-stairs; she found the lamp on her table lighted. Diantha was afraid she didn't understand kerosene and might burn the house down with it; her chamber was the guest-chamber;

when she decided to stay all summer she would be moved across the hall—still that suggestion about the lounge gave promise of keeping this large airy chamber.

To-night she must decide to stay or not to stay.

Diantha's was the fourth home that might be had for the choosing—and four dollars a week, with her washing thrown in.

With the other places there was no consideration of four dollars a week; everything was awaiting her acceptance.

Diantha had guessed correctly; she had to count her dollars and cents, sometimes she had to count them twice.

"Something has come over her to-night," Diantha remarked in her tone of understanding human nature, addressing the supper table as the door closed behind the tall figure in dark gray.

Diantha did not know people intuitively, (as she thought she did); she had to study and learn them, and the lesson was never learned.

The voice was high and clear, despite the small chest from which it issued, and Miss Vanema overheard the words.

As she turned the flame higher and sat down at

her table, she wished that something would come over her; she was not sufficient for herself.

But God never made known in any supernatural way what He had revealed in His natural way, and she had her common sense, the intelligence all her years had quickened; and she had her inclination—the inclination He had turned this way and that—and she was so sure that she had His constant guidance that she did not ask it in words as she sat leaning her elbows on the table looking down at her three letters.

If she might only wait—hesitate—dawdle a month longer! But what had this month of solitude shown her?

Not forty days, as Moses was alone with God, but thirty days of self-communion and God-communion. She was more undecided to-night as to what was best to do than that first night she came and lay awake with the strangeness all about her.

She was relieved that replies by the next mail were demanded to two of them—and the third, it would be cruel to keep that new old friend in suspense.

Yes, the three letters must be written to-night, and she must go herself to the early mail. Mr.

Van Der Zee would never think it worth his while to go especially to the post-office to take such an unimportant thing as a letter.

The observation of the keen-witted Frenchman flashed through her: "Perpetual self-contemplation."

Why not let something outside of herself decide?

There was certainly more outside of herself than inside that small citadel, Olive Vanema. What fun to tell the doctor that he had helped her by his chance quotation! She was still enough of a girl to think "what fun!" Enough of a girl with the white threads so woven in among the brown that Leila Provost had described her as having a veil of silver meshes thrown lightly over her hair; the waves of the brown hair were all the more beautiful, shining underneath.

Olive had been a brown girl; to-night she was a brown woman; the red of her cheeks flushed through brown, her eyebrows were as brown as the hair underneath the silver veil; cheek and chin were as youthfully rounded as ten years ago, and her long-lashed brown eyes—if one had seen but the eyes alone as I saw them one Sunday morning

in church, they would have guessed her a shy, sweet, steadfast girl of fifteen.

She was twice fifteen, with five years added. Her eyes took me by surprise. I do not remember anything of that morning's service but this woman's eyes; were they not a part of it?

The eyes, very sweet and steadfast, but more than troubled, anxious, were fixed upon the letters she had laid upon the table with her name uppermost.

It was *her* name; they were meant for her. God must have meant them for her. He meant her to choose—and refuse.

It was the refusing that lent the anxious look to her eyes. The refusing was decided upon; had she not come to Diantha's for this reason among others, to escape the question this letter had put with such tremendous earnestness; and there it was facing her. She could not escape the consequences of last winter's friendship with Andrew Croft. The consequences to herself were not alarming; a summer added of such open friendship, with its serious walks and talks, would leave her unscathed; but he was different—he was a man, and she knew nothing of men outside of books.

She talked thus to herself as she scanned his firm writing of her name : Miss Olive Vanema. It was a business hand, with self-confidence in every stroke.

And then to parry the rush of painful memories, she compared the penmanship with that of the others; one had an ugly V. and the other a handsome O.

The three letters had stirred her deeply ; now that eye and lip were under no inspection she gave them their natural way, and the lip quivered, and the eyes filled.

Ten years ago, when she was young, that third letter (it ranked third-rate in its importance as it affected herself) would have made a change in her life—if she had belonged to herself. She had never belonged to herself since she was ten years old ; it was then that she made herself understand that she must live for her father and mother—her invalid mother and spendthrift father.

But she had not known Andrew Croft when she was young and impressible ; it would not have been for his happiness then, for she did not have herself to give, and now when she had herself to give she did not have herself to give to him—for she did not love him.

She was not young and impressible, she told herself, but she could not give herself, even at her age, and she smiled at the words she did not half believe, except at love's dear bidding. So that was settled and out of the way. She liked to have things out of the way of herself. As Diantha would put it, Andrew Croft had "offered himself" to her. The pride and humility of his letter touched her; she liked him the better for it; still she simply liked him and wished he had not thought of writing that letter.

When she was seventeen a love akin to this had been thrust upon her, and she had refused with indignation; how dared anybody?

There had been other times since, she remembered wearily, and she had not cared to be made happy, or to be made unhappy, and now, with a great difference, for she liked this man, it had to come again, when she was so old, almost thirty-six, with white hair this minute tumbling down over her eyes, and she had to write the answer.

It was eighteen years since she began to take care of her father and mother: no wonder she felt old. But being not young and out here in the country did not put her out of the world, only in Heaven

would she be enough out of the world for questions like this not to be asked and answered.

And then her thoughts ran on, as she had a way of letting them do when she was troubled, and she remembered the old lady she boarded with that happy summer she taught a country school; she came to her one afternoon after school with a letter in her hand and such a comical and half-ashamed expression in her face: "Miss Vanema, I'm very sorry to trouble you, but I haven't written a letter for ten years and I don't like people to know my business and ridicule me—and him; but I can trust you. Just tell him that I am too old to think of such a thing, and have had my own way too long, and I'm sorry he misses his wife so, but I can't think of it a minute."

She smiled as she saw again the wrinkled old face, and wished she could tell Andrew Croft the story; she could not "think of it a minute."

And then the offending letter, with its self-confident writing of her name, was pushed aside—answered.

Even with the burden that had fallen on her young years she had cared for her own happiness all her life; she had wished for it, worked for it,

prayed for it ; by caring so vehemently she had not gained it ; in her new phase of perpetual self-contemplation she was reproaching herself for sinful ingratitude when she was low-spirited ; she was under obligation to the Giver of her life to be, at least, quietly and meekly happy ; she could not hope to be radiantly and girlishly joyous again ; and now, after this month of withdrawal from her busy world, this time of studying herself and what God would have of her, she had a glimmer of the truth that there might be something better in the world, in the world of God's making, than one's own happiness.

She had taken thought for this happiness, and had not got it—out of things ; somehow, in this month of wandering about alone, and in listening to the caretaking talk of new people, old words with newest meaning had been born into her heart ; the meaning was born, it came as suddenly as the new birth sometimes comes, and she knew she was a new creature. “*Take no thought for your life,*” for—there was a reason ; she had learned a little of the reason—“Your life is hid with Christ in God.

Without any thought for her own happiness, her decision should be made to-night ; she knew which

she would love best to do; she knew she would choose busy idleness rather than work.

All the happiness she sought (all she wished to seek) was to be happy in the way Christ was happy if He were happy; if He were not, she did not wish to be, or she had thought so, sitting on the door-stone reading Faber's "Dryness in Prayer." After her walk and with these letters from the world of happenings she was not so sure.

But this was not answering the letters that must be answered.

The third envelope was pushed still farther away from the others; she must think about these two. And staying with Diantha. She had forgotten Diantha's.

"He seems to think I may be had for the asking," she thought, half-admiring, half-indignant, but "it's only God may be had for the asking."

Then one of the letters was drawn out of its envelope, and re-read with long pauses that held the weight of the pressing sentences.

"Don't wait to think, come," the letter opened in Harriet Peters' lively style. "I need you, Olive Vanema. I have needed you ten years without knowing it, stupid that I am. Each solitary one

of my twenty-five boarding pupils needs you and each one of the forty-two day-scholars needs you in a lesser degree. I know you, I know your resources. I want you for a house-mother—a beautiful mother that the girls would rave about. My time, I am sadly learning, is too fully taken up with the intellectual life of this girls'-world to give thought and time to the training they need twenty times more, and with their fashionable mothers may never get at all.

"It has been on my conscience nights unnumbered that I fail the girls where they need educating most. Had I a daughter, I would not send her to Miss Peters' Young Ladies' Seminary.

"You need never enter a class-room again. I want you in the *home*. Come and be yourself and my girls will be helped. Come and be to them what you would be to Syrian girls. For salary you shall have the room you always liked best, sharing with no one, and the finest of the wheat (boarding school wheat). Now if you are ever lonely or desolate again, whose fault will it be?

"Come or write by return mail. If you are absolutely engaged elsewhere, I can get Sara Douglas, who isn't half the woman you are; she leaves

town this week, unless I capture her. But I don't want her."

Whose fault, indeed? It was most tempting. She loved work, she was rested for work. A year ago when two physicians had told her that their skill could do nothing for her and that they could but watch the progress of her disease, had she not promised the Lord "who healeth all our diseases" that if He would give her life and health again she would give the strength of that life to Him; it should be His life. His life, for which she must take no anxious thought. Was that renewed strength for this work? Or for this rest and recreation? she asked, dropping a small sheet out of an ill-fitting envelope. What a beginning again these opportunities were; these opened doors, two of which she must shut with her own hand. It was like being young! With her hair!

She laughed aloud in the joy of her heart, giving a look at the reflection of herself in the glass of the bureau. In the lamplight she saw a beautiful face. Very grateful and very humble, she covered the face with both hands, whispering: "I thank thee for my face."

She was poor; she had been poor and hard-

working all her life ; she had so little to give ; she had but herself ; how could she but be glad that she was pleasant to look upon ? Perhaps these girls would be drawn to her because of it, and then she could be more perfectly the house-mother. Her ideal of motherhood was so high that no mother she had ever known had attained to it.

Poor child, her own mother, a peevish, selfish invalid, with an unloving heart, had fallen so far below her daughter's beautiful ideal that the name "mother" in no way belonged to her. The second letter was reperused with the same thoughtful pauses ; there was nothing business-like in the hand or in the manner the business was set forth :

"DEAR MISS OLIVE—Leila proposed it yesterday, and has given me no peace since. I cannot take her abroad again without a companion. She has such a remarkable genius for doing what she wills with herself that anxiety about her would be a weight upon my researches. I should continually be anxious about her. I suppose I shall be anxious if I leave her at home, she is such a fly-away. She dares not ask you herself, and promises her old

father a dozen (extra) kisses if he will get Miss Olive for her.

"Your expenses will be paid from the hour you leave my house until the hour you return to it. Leila declares she will not sleep until she hears from you. Let her sleep as soon as you can. I must sail the 17th inst.

"Your uncle's old friend, and yours,

"HARRISON PROVOST."

Her uncle's old friend was very dear to her, so was the girl, Leila.

The other was work, this was pleasure; a long summer of pleasure. Had she ever had in her life a long vacation? Day school, night school, and Sunday school, with housework, sewing and nursing between times and vacations of hard work—friends said it was no wonder that she broke down at last; but was her new strength her very own? For fifteen years she had supported her father and mother, then she had worked to pay their last expenses; while she was ill her father's brother died, bequeathing to his spendthrift brother's daughter his small property; the income from it was about three hundred dollars; she had rested and been rich on this annuity.

It was so surprising and so altogether delightful to eat bread and butter that she had not earned herself; the relief of having no bills to pay, of never being in debt was exquisite pain. Harrison Provost was the guardian of her money, and she was the guardian of herself. There was work, there was pleasure; and—why, there was Diantha's! She had forgotten that she might choose to stay at Diantha's.

She had forgotten Andrew Croft. Had his letter not been on the table with the others, she would not have remembered that she had forgotten him. How could she decide to-night? Outside of herself were many considerations and people. Was she not under obligation to her uncle's old friend in whose house she had been ill? And Harriet Peters, the friend of her girlhood, who had been chief adviser during her years of successful teaching? But for her she would not have had that position as principal of the primary school.

But—and here she turned to the consideration of herself, to that self-contemplation she had forever set aside—she had never had any time to herself, or life of her own; Sara Douglas could take the girls for the remainder of the summer term and Leila—

But she must sleep over Leila, the hy-away girl, who had no mother, who stepped so softly in and out of her chamber those long weeks.

She must sleep, even if Leila could not.

She would rise early and write her letters while the air was fresh and the birds were singing. The somethings outside of herself pulling different ways were too bewildering.

"Let others miss me, never miss me, God," she repeated softly.

If she might stay here at Diantha's and be happy—then she checked herself—and be still, and grow wise and fruitful; that was all she asked of this summer.

This was the greatest temptation of all.

She did not sleep, but she kept her head on the pillow.

In the morning she went through the fields and woods with three letters in her hand; the reply to Andrew Croft was kind and most firm; truly she could not think of it a minute; to the others she sent the same message: "I am in a strait betwixt three; I must have one day longer; will decide by next mail."

III.

ONE DAY LONGER.

"The different rate of speed at which an impression from without travels along the nervous system of the individual is called by astronomers *the personal equation*."

"Nothing is ever settled until it is settled right."

—DR. LEONARD BACON.

THE only frankness about Olive Vanema was in her eyes and voice and manner; her manner was frankness itself; she rarely gave her confidence, she was sure she never gave herself; her manner drew you to herself, but you did not thereby gain herself; unless stirred to her deepest self, she gave nothing of her truest self. She knew this and mourned over it.

"Oh," cried a girl in her class one day after half an hour with her, "I wish I could be like Miss Vanema. "You think she is telling you all about herself, but when you think it over there's not one thing you can remember."

This morning, walking home from the mail, she "ached," as Leila would have phrased it, to have somebody to talk to. She envied the birds because they could pour out themselves in their bird-talk to their hearts' content; but to talk to her heart's content presupposed somebody to her heart's content to talk to. She did not want all the world, like the birds. Her lips had been sealed so long; she had spoken so few words that she wished to speak all this month. In this world so full of folk where *was* this somebody to her heart's fulness of content? Had she ever had that time for one blessed hour? Not with her father, not with her mother, and she had never had time for any one else—excepting that summer when her mother could spare her, and she taught a country school, and boarded with Miss Tunison, and studied and read evenings with Miss Tunison's nephew, Allan Menzies. And then she only half talked. But, if that other were in the world, would her present perplexity be made plain?

Thinking and thinking added to her bewilderment; resolving to leave it where it was, she persuaded herself that she was beginning to think about something else.

How could anything happen between one sunrise and sunset to make anything different ? Here at Diantha's outside things were not near enough to her to be outside of herself ; everything was outside other people.

She left the house early. Mollie was singing up-stairs and Diantha was rushing about the kitchen ; as she passed through the entry she noticed a gentleman's ulster thrown over the back of a chair and on the floor beside the chair a hat of soft gray felt ; a new-comer, evidently, another pair of eyes to be observant of her and critical.

When she entered the house they were all at the breakfast table ; she went up to her chamber to brush her hair afresh and exchange her walking dress for her morning cashmere of dark red.

Diantha's greeting held a note of surprise ; Miss Vanema had never run after the mail before daylight before, and she told her so with emphasis.

"Not before—just after," said Olive.

"You must have slept with one eye open," remarked Mr. Van Der Zec.

As he seldom remarked anything, Olive was not displeased with the familiarity.

At one end of the breakfast table was seated the man

of the gray hat and ulster; his face was toward Mollie, who stood at his side pouring milk into his glass from a large pitcher. It was fifteen years since she had seen Allan Menzies, and yet the memory of that long-ago summer flashed through her from head to foot like an electric shock as the stranger arose at Diantha's impressive introduction: "My second cousin, Mr. Menzies, from New York, Miss Vanema."

He came forward as if he, too, remembered, and taking her hand, held it in a very middle-aged fashion. And he *was* middle-aged; another shock under which she had to steady herself.

"I wondered if it could be yourself, when Diantha was enlarging upon her boarder last night; your name is unusual, you know."

"And that was about all I *could* tell him," broke in Diantha.

"But I should have recognized you in an African jungle; you have not changed—oh, yes, your hair! But why haven't you grown old like me?"

He had grown old, she could not contradict him; as he bent toward her she could see that the top of his head was bald, his moustache and long side whiskers were grizzly; he was stout, his hands,

even, were plump ; his voice was heavier, or had it grown hoarse ?

Why, catching her breath in unpleasant surprise, the years had been as many for her as for him ; she must be middle-aged herself—he used to be seven years older. As Diantha passed her husband his second cup of coffee, she came to the swift conclusion that her boarder was very glad to see Allan Menzies again. The exhilaration of her walk and this surprise at the end of it kept Olive's cheeks and eyes in a glow.

The conversation at the table was usually a monologue delivered by Diantha, with attempts at talk wedged in by the others ; even her coffee and generous bowl of oatmeal did not prevent utterance. They simply made it laborious. Miss Vanema was relieved that Diantha had some new listener upon whom to pour her endless stream of comment and question. It was not easy to attend to such a matter-of-fact affair as breakfast with the rush of recollections that overwhelmed her ; it was so long ago, and he had changed and she had changed, and everybody who belonged to her was dead, and she had no home, and to-morrow she did not know where she would be.

That summer at Miss Tunison's his smooth face was as fair and rosy checked as a girl's, he was not broad shouldered or stout, his hands were slender and now—she did not care to look at him, he was a common-place, middle-aged man. He had developed according to something within himself, and not according to something within herself. What a girl of ideals she had been! And what a shattering time was middle age! They had read together Browning and Mrs. Browning, and he had read by himself German and French, and in the evenings had helped her with the horrid Miscellaneous Examples at the end of the Arithmetic. She had told him about her father, and her father's brother, who would not help him at all because he had thrown away his small fortune, and how harsh and unkind he was to her when she had asked him for a hundred dollars to pay a bill—only for the loan of it, she would work hard to repay it; he knew all about her life then; she could not tell him anything about her life now—if she had any. She thought she would love to live awhile without any.

In those days she learned to take an interest in politics, foreign and domestic, for he told her she

would be a narrow-minded woman unless she read the daily paper, and Miss Tunison used to listen to the newspaper in the evening and make shrewd remarks, and then leave the "young things" together for poetry and all the music they could get out of her untuned melodeon. The old lady was infirm, and the young things had grown old. All in fifteen years!

And then her lips curved merrily and she smiled, and Diantha looked pleased, thinking Miss Vanema appreciated her last remark! Now they were old things together; and then she was ashamed of herself for the "together," and finished her oatmeal with her eyes dropped like a hushed child.

"I wish this day might be twice as long as usual," Mollie wedged in between two rapid declarations of her mother's.

"As long as that long day of Joshua's," replied Miss Vanema, and somehow the words got across the table to Mollie.

And then, unheeding the sounds about her in the still under current of her life, her thoughts ran on; it *would* be a long day, long enough for the Lord to think for her, and tell her to-night what He had been thinking. Her own thinking seemed to hin-

der. She was confident of this one thing only : she was willing to go or stay where she was bidden.

With the hum of voices in her ears something within her measured itself into expression :

“Waiting before Thee, Lord,
Upon submissive knees,
Waiting to hear Thy word,
To know what Thou dost please—
What Thou wilt have me do,
In this sore and narrow strait,
Where I am hedged about
With nothing to do but wait.
I will not turn—nor stir,
To follow my own self-will;
I will wait till Thou dost speak,
I will listen—and be still.
Then give me patience, Lord,
To wait what Thou wilt say,
If it but be Thy word,
I will follow it *any way*.”

It was scarcely a wonder that she started with a painful start and rush of color when the hospitable voice of Diantha sounded loud in her ears, asking if she would have ham and eggs, or steak, or both. Diantha was the united head of her household ; she served at both ends of her table. The platter of ham and eggs was placed before the other head of

the house, and he served in dumb obedience, with up-lifted knife and fork. If he ever put the usual question of preference, his wife repeated it in a higher key. Mr. Van Der Zee had not a very loud voice indoors.

"Eggs, please," repeated Miss Vanema, with some embarrassment, which sharp-eyed Diantha was attributing to causes of her own conjuring.

"The ham is tender," said Diantha, who suffered personal injury when any thing upon her table was slighted, "I cured this myself; and a piece of steak, too, David. If Miss Vanema will tramp like a tramp, she must eat like a tramp."

"So, Menzies, you are overworked," said Mr Van Der Zee, the first observation, he had indulged in since his greeting to Miss Vanema.

"Yes," Diantha hastened to reply before Menzies could open his lips, "he's got writer's cramp—it's the muscles of his right hand and arm; a kind of paralysis that writers often have—and he can't go on with his work until he's had a month or two of country air and milk and rest and rubbing—it should be *rubbed*, Menzies."

"Plowing will be good for a change," suggested the master of the house.

"Not plowing, David," said Diantha, displeased. "He must begin with something gentle, something like working in a flower-garden."

"The pen is supposed to be mightier than the sword or the sceptre ; no wonder it paralyzed him," Mollie burst in with a school-girl laugh. "I'll be your amanuensis, Cousin Menzies. Can't you dictate to somebody?" she inquired, with sudden seriousness.

"Mollie, you've struck it!" he exclaimed. "Now for the somebody! My work is all in my head. I've been thinking tremendously, since I couldn't write, and on paper after a rough fashion, and I could dictate with perfect satisfaction to an intelligent copyist. I'm preparing articles for an Encyclopedia. My trunk is at the station, crowded with books of reference and note-books. Now for a rapid, clear hand and a brain that can spell and punctuate and paragraph without any telling. I do not want to be confused and interrupted with answering a single question. If I had *that* kind of a copyist, I could do good work; I might even attempt something else I have in mind. This is my second attack, and I shan't be indiscreet and begin work too soon again."

Mollie's mother gave her a triumphant glance; here was her opportunity to make a little money, as she had been wishing. Mollie would like this better than taking two more boarders. Menzies had come without waiting to write; he was an unexpected "boarder." If Di would not take him in, he was certain that the "other house" would.

"But, O, Menzies," cried Mollie, dropping the deferential "Cousin" in her eagerness, "I write a detestable hand, and I know nothing of punctuation but the period. I *can* make a full stop."

"Which is more than some folks can do," said David, with a sly look at his wife.

"But he can look over it and punctuate afterward," suggested Diantha, after a spiteful look at husband.

"That is what he pays me for doing," said Mollie. "No, I will have none of that."

"But you can teach her then," Diantha continued.

"Teaching isn't in the bond," Menzies returned, discontentedly. "I can't teach her to write a decent hand."

"Mollie, that's what your mother sent you to boarding school for," reproved her father, sternly.

"Miss Vanema," appealed Menzies, "did you teach your girls to punctuate? I've seen college-bred men that couldn't do it."

Diantha's face was radiant with a bit of coveted information.

"I might have known it, Miss Vanema, you have the air of one. You are so particular and you never make mistakes in grammar and pronunciation."

"How do *you* know?" her husband inquired, with an amused glance at Menzies.

"Are you teaching now?" continued Diantha, passing Mollie her coffee without the second spoonful of sugar.

"It seems not," answered Olive, thinking that she had not taught somebody not to ask intrusive questions.

"Of course not; it's your vacation," said Diantha, undisturbed. "Were you a public or a private school teacher?"

"Both," said Olive, the courtesy of her tone softening its abruptness.

"Were you principal?"

"The last two years."

"Then you must have had a good salary."

The glance shot at her from the gray eyes at the other end of the table surprised Olive into a quick laugh. It was so like those days at Miss Tunison's; it was refreshing to be for one instant in young times again. Another glance with some fire in it was flashed at her from Diantha's small black eyes; she was sensitive about being laughed at; Cousin Menzies might be quizzical, but this woman school-teacher had no right to be.

"Oh, dear," cried Mollie, with a comical groan, "I can't change my hand in a day."

"And you wouldn't like to make the printers swear," said Menzies seriously.

"Oh, no," cried Diantha, shocked, "but Mollie *can* change her hand."

"With laborious effort," sighed Mollie. "Mamma, I shall have to earn money some easier way."

"After all your school bills!" her father could not forbear.

"Her school bills are all right, David," exclaimed Diantha, with quick anger. "You can't expect Mollie to write like Menzies, who has made a business of it, or a school-teacher—"

"Who hasn't made a business of it," interrupted Menzies. "I wish I could find a school-teacher to

copy for me. Now you have put the idea into my brain, Mollie, it will buzz until I can bring it into working order. I have gained an extension of my time, but I would like to get ahead several hundred pages in the next four weeks. How many foolscap pages can you do in a day, Miss Vanema ?”

“Miss Vanema has other fish to fry,” said Diantha tartly

“I wasn’t daring to hint otherwise. I asked merely to know what I might expect an amanuensis to do.”

“For Dr. Provost I copied twenty-five one day, but the second day I ran down to twenty, and the third day did but fifteen. I am not rapid.”

“Perhaps that is rapid for a lady’s hand,” Menzies replied. “Twenty a day would suit me excellently. Do your eyes hold out ?”

“I am not working them hard. I seldom write or read longer than three hours at a time.”

“That is too long. I’ve been working ten hours a day straight ahead.”

“But, Miss Vanema, *you* wouldn’t do it ?” Diantha demanded.

“Di, my questions were not personal,” said Menzies irritably.

"A direct appeal is sometimes considered so," returned Diantha, with a laugh.

To think there might be another thing to choose! In this way she could earn something; in the other ways she could save something. Then she was provoked with herself, would she ever rid herself of her long and enforced habit of reckoning upon the bread-and-butter side of life? Giving her chair an impatient push, she arose from the table; there was no table etiquette at Diantha's; the hostess herself would leave the table without a word of excuse half a dozen times during a meal, to attend to some urgent demand in the kitchen.

"Mollie can paint tiles," Diantha hastened to say, accepting with a nod Miss Vanema's murmured "Excuse me, Mrs. Van Der Zee."

"Unfortunately, painted tiles are not in my line," observed Menzies. "If I had a daughter, she should learn to write a plain hand and to punctuate."

"Perhaps you can get your time still further extended then," remarked Diantha dryly, with the color burning in her cheeks.

Miss Vanema stepped to the bay window and stood looking down into Diantha's huge cactus.

Menzies laughed, and arose also. He laid his hand on Mollie's shoulder; he and Mollie understood each other.

David was wiping the tips of his fingers on his soiled handkerchief; guests only were provided with napkins, as Diantha did the washing and Mollie the ironing.

"*David!*" expostulated his wife, while Mollie mentally decided that Menzies should not see her father do this thing another time.

"Menzies, how is Miss Graham?" inquired Diantha as if she had just thought of her.

"As usual," was the quiet reply.

"No better! All these years!" exclaimed Diantha, with real sympathy. "How many years is it now since she has walked a step?"

"Five," said Menzies, with his hand still on Mollie's shoulder.

"She must have given up hope by this time."

"Would *you*?" asked Menzies.

"Why, haven't you?"

"Yes, I have," he said so gravely that Olive lifted her eyes from the cactus.

"But you are engaged to her still," Diantha persisted.

"Cousin Di, I shall always be engaged to her still."

Mollie's hand was lifted to brush back her uncomfortable hair, but her fingers gave Menzies' hand a light touch. He left the room instantly, passing out into the entry; Olive saw him, from behind the tall cactus, start down the lane.

"Everybody doesn't know," Diantha began in her tone of enlightenment, turning to Miss Vanema, "that Menzies is engaged. It is a very lamentable story and is making an old man of him. Mollie was a little girl when it happened. I remember so well—I was braiding her a red dress, and he stood in this very room and told me; they had been engaged but two months when she had her fall; she was dancing at a ball—she was very gay—and she slipped, and she has not stepped since. She lies on a couch; she has everything this world can give; she is the only daughter, her father is rich, she has no mother; she must be twenty-five now—she fell on her twentieth birthday."

Miss Vanema was still looking down into the cactus; Diantha watched her face and knew that she had an interested listener.

"I have seen her photograph. She was very fine looking then; she will not have it taken now. She doesn't weigh a hundred pounds now and her hair is cut, her beautiful hair. She is not a happy disposition; she cannot get used to it."

"Mother, who could?" Mollie burst out. "I wish you wouldn't ask him about her."

"I *shall* ask him about her! I wouldn't be so unsympathetic as not to talk to him about her. She has been in Germany two years, Miss Vanema. I hoped the great doctors over there could cure her. She suffered everything to go, but she *would* go. I wonder how he can write to her with his lame hand. She can't write when her head is very bad. It's the most distressing courtship I ever heard about. And he is so faithful!"

"So is she," contended Mollie, with a flash in her eye.

"Now he's gone off and won't be back for worship," said Diantha petulantly; "he has such a way of going off. I never heard him make a religious remark in my life."

Miss Vanema turned and spoke gently: "Did you ever hear him make an irreligious remark, Mrs. Van Der Zee?"

"No," said Diantha, surprised out of a flood of words, "but he ought to stay to worship just the same. Mollie, I wish you *could* write for him, child. David, we'd better sit down right away."

Hiram, the hired man, pushed his chair noisily back against the wall and sat down for worship; he had been in the family fifteen years, and knew all the family secrets. Miss Vanema sat apart; she did not enjoy this family worship, it made her homesick. David hurried through the chapter in course, reading so indistinctly that were she not familiar with the book from which he read she could not have caught the sense, and then he mumbled through a prayer that she was not sufficiently familiar with to catch the sense. Diantha believed that sometimes Miss Vanema, excused herself from the breakfast table that she might avoid family worship; she was sensitive about this hereditary custom being observed, and conducting it was one thing she could not do for David.

"David, I'd have a little grit when I worshiped the Lord as well as when I drove oxen, it seems to me," she remarked to him one morning when Miss Vanema did not stay.

She had not yet inquired into Miss Vanema's peculiar views, (she was sure they were peculiar) and she believed that she had sufficient evidence for believing her to be not a Christian; she hoped she was a "safe" companion for Mollie; she had questioned Mollie, and Mollie had laughed and said she had never heard her say "anything wicked."

As Diantha knelt with her head bowed on her elbows, she was exercised about Miss Vanema; she had been with them three Sundays, and each Sunday had positively refused to go to church and had never given any reason except a very polite "No thank you." To be sure the carriage was full without her, the three seats were crowded with three on each seat, and once Mollie sat in her lap, for Hiram always wanted to go, and she didn't know where they could squeeze in a large woman like Miss Vanema, although she had told her that she or Mollie would cheerfully stay at home, although they would hate to awfully, to make room for her; she was afraid Miss Vanema was not orthodox. She had just decided that Miss Vanema must weigh at least one hundred and thirty-five pounds when David's quick "Amen" brought her to the knowledge that she was on her knees in prayer time.

She arose with a flushed and most serious face, her heart aching with penitence for her wandering thoughts. No one knew it, but she had many a heart-ache over herself.

David brushed off his knees—he always brushed off his knees with his hands when he arose from worship—and with an expression of returned cheerfulness followed Hiram out into the kitchen. Both men were in their shirt sleeves. Miss Vanema did not like to eat breakfast with men in their shirt sleeves.

“We must be spry to-day, Mollie,” exclaimed Diantha. “Just see if my bread is light.”

And then, to satisfy her conscience, Diantha left her bread, which needed moulding that minute, and went up-stairs and read a short Psalm and knelt and prayed a brief, fervent prayer, then she felt better; and running down-stairs like a girl, she found her bread had not run over the top of the pan. Mollie was singing nonsense as she washed the breakfast dishes; her mother loved her nonsense, and wondered where she found so much of it.

Miss Vanema, on the door-stone, was listening to the clear sweet voice. What must it be like to be

singing and washing dishes in a kitchen with a mother who loved every spot in the kitchen floor your foot touched ! Mollie's nonsense was one of the things near enough to Olive Vanema to be something outside of herself, she could lose herself in it ; this girl was growing very near to her.

“ ‘ Little old woman up in the sky,
See how she makes the feathers fly !
She sits in the twilight overhead
And picks her geese for a feather bed, ’ ”

Mollie sang as she tripped about putting the clean dishes away.

Then Diantha's voice broke in, and Olive was afraid the singing would stop ; it was queer how the music and the silly words rested her ; she had thought her serious thoughts so long—and did not a time come when the heart might have a vacation from feeling as well as the brain from thinking ?

Mollie was singing again :

“ ‘ The gray geese flap their heavy wings;
The little old woman sings and sings:
“ How strange that the people down below
Should call my bits of feathers snow !
“ ‘ Here is a handful soft and white—
That is to cover the crocus tight.
Here is another whiter still,
And that is to hide the daffodil.

“ ‘ Here is one for the great fir tree,
And another here for the chickadee ! ”
Little old woman overhead,
What *will* become of your feather bed ? ’ ”

The girl's laugh was as sweet as her singing.

What must it be like, thought the homesick woman on the door-stone, to be moulding bread in a kitchen and have a bright, sweet daughter tripping about who loved you better than any one else in the world ? It must be *like* God's thought of you ; but why had He thought such a different thing for Diantha and herself ? Would He ever tell her ?

Menzies had wandered off down the lane. Mollie was sorry he did not stay to worship ; she thought he was not very polite ; but then he had the reputation of rudeness—he was a very queer old bachelor—but she revered and loved him for his loyalty to that poor, dear beautiful Virginia Graham. One twilight last summer he told her the story ; they were walking down the lane together towards the spring lot ; she had promised to show him a bed of moss near the spring ; after a silence he began to talk ; it might have been something in the evening song of the thrush, or something in the after-glow in the sky, or something in

the letter in his pocket, or something in him or in her—anyway, he told her the story, silent man that he was, and this summer he had been more silent than ever. She did not promise not to tell; he knew he had no need to ask her that; he told it in his strong fashion in a few words: ten years ago he had business to do for Virginia's father; he was with them in their summer home; he had never seen Virginia before; he did not care for her; she was a butterfly sort of girl, beautiful and spoiled; and then he saw that she cared very much for him; she had had everything her father could get for her all her life; and now she wanted something her father's position and wealth could not buy; she was only a girl, and he was a man, middle-aged even then, a bookworm at that, and she was half engaged to a bright young fellow whom her father liked; she was very loving and lovely, and showed how she cared so simply and innocently, that before he knew, before he meant anything but to be very kind and go away as soon as he could, he had said something that she misinterpreted and then she had, spoiled child as she was, told him she loved him, even better than papa, and she had cried last night because he was

so cold to her and going away so soon ; papa would not be angry, he would let her choose for herself, and he must speak to papa that very day. And so it went on, and he was in and could not get out, for she was frail and high-spirited, and the humiliation and disappointment might be too much for her ; and it made no difference to him, he was a man and could bear it. Then her fall and long helplessness—how could he tell her the truth ? Twice he had begged her, for her own sake, to release him, but she wept and said she would die without him.

Mollie listened with sobbing breaths and laid her hand on his for a moment as it rested on the top rail of the fence near which they were standing ; her heart would break if she were that girl and had to be told such a thing. She knew girls were very foolish, sometimes, and selfish, and did not think—but he was a man and could bear it. The story was told a year ago, and he had since never alluded to it. Little nineteen-year-old Mollie was sympathy itself ; she needed to rough it, her father said, to keep her from being so tender-hearted. She was like her mother only in her slightness and prettiness—black-eyed, black-haired, low-browed and soft

cheeked, a light tread, a clear laugh, a quick word—"the sweetest thing that ever grew beside a human door."

"She is like her father, no pusher," Diantha had said to Miss Vanema, with pride and regret.

Mollie was not a talker, but she loved to talk to Miss Vanema; as soon as she could escape from the kitchen, she hurried out to the camp-chair on the door-stone.

Miss Vanema was sewing; Mollie had never seen her sew before; she imagined that she did not know how to do such commonplace things.

"*Can't* you write for Cousin Menzies?" she asked coaxingly. "I can't think of any one else. I would do anything for him, but I cannot do that."

"Perhaps I cannot punctuate to suit him," said Miss Vanema very gravely.

"You can do *anything*," declared Mollie, positively.

"If I could do anything, what would I do?" cried Miss Vanema, a merry light brightening the brown of her eyes. "I think I would buy a hammock, and swing in it under your grandfather's apple blossoms."

When Mollie came out she was wondering if it

would be very extravagant to buy a nammock; she had never owned a hammock. There were fields and fields to look across, a road winding off somewhere, and houses and a church spire—miles of greenness, which comforted her more than anything else.

After Mollie went up-stairs to sing and move about the chambers, doing her morning work, she kept her restless fingers upon her sewing, but she could not keep her restless thoughts upon it. *Would* she like to write for Mr. Menzies? Her hours again might be as regular as the clock; the routine of the hours from nine until three had been so long a part of her life that she grew fidgety without work to map out her days; routine satisfied something in her mental make-up; she began to think she was a kind of machine, with a woman's heart clogging the wheels; if she kept her heart still, would the wheels go on?

The merry light flashed over her face again; laughing at herself was one of her alteratives; and now she was ready to drop her sewing and jump into something.

The unexpected appearance of Allan Menzies had shaken her into a sudden homesickness. She

would be glad to be in the school-room again, and hurrying across the street at the noon recess to prepare her mother's lunch and speak an encouraging word to her shiftless father, who had not lifted his hand to earn a dollar since he lost his position in the bank when she was sixteen; that was home, she knew that father and mother loved her—she had not known it then; they had not shown her that they cared for anything beside the money she earned and the comfort she gave them in the little house she paid the rent for; but it was home; and to-day she was homesick.

That summer she kept Allan Menzies back—she kept herself back—because of her father and mother; she had no right to be natural and girlish, she was the man of the house. And now the man of the house was a woman of middle age, who understood girls better than any girl knew.

“O, Miss Vanema,” Diantha cried, hurrying out in great excitement, as Olive arose to start off somewhere, “here's a telegram for you! The boy was in a dreadful hurry, and I gave him his twenty-five cents for bringing it before I brought it to you.”

Miss Vanema's lips paled as she tore open the

coarse envelope. Was it Leila or Harriet Peters ? Had something happened to one of the few she had to love ?

"Oh, it's nothing to be frightened about !" she exclaimed, relieved. "Thank you for paying for it."

"It was only for bringing it; I wrote your name in his book—and I was dying to know if it were anything dreadful."

"Not at all—only something I am glad to know."

"Will it take you away ?" asked Diantha, with concern.

"Exactly the contrary—as far it goes."

Without thinking of concealing her news, Miss Vanema tore the telegram into pieces and began rolling one scrap in her fingers.

"H'm," ejaculated Diantha, even the pretty black hairs in her neck, at the bottom of her French twist, tightening with indignation; did Miss Vanema think it was not safe to leave it around ? Olive laid the silver piece in her hand; Diantha would have given the twenty-five cents to read the telegram. It ran :

"Case of scarlet fever ; boarding girls fled in a panic. Will write in a day or two."

So this was taken out of her deciding. Leila would be sure she had no excuse for not accepting a summer of good times. The last scrap was being absent-mindedly rolled in her fingers when Mr. Menzies came up the lane.

The lane began outside this side gate and ran up and ran down between many fields through the one hundred and fifty acres of the farm. "Pond Lily Farm" Molly had named the place, from the fact that yellow lilies once floated on the surface of the water that in old times turned her grandfather's saw-mill. The mill was in ruins and the pond half dry, the lilies were a thing of the past, but Mollie clung to the name and dated her letters with it. Mr. Menzies' hands were laden with green things, too; with her head out the kitchen window Diantha called to him to ask why in the name of wonder, when the world was so full of green stuff, did he care to pull such wild things.

"That's why," he answered, with his quizzical laugh.

He went into the entry and shouted to Mollie; she ran down to take his green things and exclaim over them.

"I couldn't find the wild mignonette," he said.

"I looked in all the marshy places; it must be too early."

Mollie was sweeping, she ran down to him with the broom in her hand, thinking of that other girl who would give all her father's wealth to be able to run down-stairs with a broom in her hand to take wild, wet things from the hand of this bald-headed, stout old bachelor.

"I was going for wild flowers this afternoon. I wish I *could* punctuate, Cousin Menzies."

"Don't fret about it, you can do something better."

"And you *couldn't* do it afterward?"

"I'm a fussy old fellow; it would wear the skin off my bones to know that each sentence was not perfect as it went down."

"But couldn't you—" Mollie had her mother's talent for planning—"dictate with the punctuation, read the commas and semicolons off to me."

"And then my train of thought would be thrown off the track."

"I didn't know such stupid things as you put in Encyclopedias required a whole train of thought. I thought a baggage car would do."

Olive heard this bit of talk and pondered it as

she started off somewhere; the lane beckoned to her, it was long, and it ended somewhere. The grassy back yard at Diantha's was separated by a fence of white palings from another grassy yard—the front yard of the hundred year-old house she was born in. If she stayed, Olive had thoughts of asking that she might take up her abode, excepting for meals, in one of the chambers of this old house. Diantha's mother took her through the house one day, and opened the door into exactly the nook she would love to go to sleep in, and to awake in the morning in; it was under the eaves, and the two small windows looked out into the tops of apple trees. Of all the sweet things that grew she loved best the apple blossoms. Nobody knew it, but there were apple blossoms pressed between the leaves among the Miscellaneous Examples of an old Arithmetic packed away in her box of school books. If apple blossoms would last all summer, the sights of old Europe to her would have no attraction.

Diantha's house was built the year before Mollie was born; the neighbors said the old man was foolish to build a house in his own front yard, but Diantha's mother chose the building site, it would be so easy for her to run in at Diantha's back door if

the children were sick. The children were sick; before Mollie was four years old, her three sisters died, and then more than ever the mother was glad of the back door to run in at, for Dianthy needed a deal of comforting.

In the old house Diantha's father and mother had lived ever since the day of their marriage, sixty-three years before; Diantha's sisters were all at home; one was a widow, the others had never married. The one hundred and fifty acres belonged to the old man, but everybody spoke of the place as "Diantha's"; at his death—his will had been made thirty years—his daughters were to share and share alike in real estate and personal property. Diantha told Miss Vanema how they were "situated" the morning after she came, together with the history of her five sisters.

The soul of the old house was always escaping through its doors and windows; the five "girls" and the talkative old mother never let the echoes sleep. The six women talked all the time and talked all together; good-naturedly and ill-naturedly, they were forever contradicting each other. If Mary Jane said that a certain thing happened at half-past ten o'clock, somebody would dispute it and declare

that it was quarter to eleven—and each of the others would take sides and prove themselves right by long and loud argument. The disputes never ran higher than to call each other “a ninny,” or “a goose,” and the next meal was partaken of with everybody good-naturedly waiting on each other and pressing each other to eat.

Hastening past, for fear that Lucy Ann, in the yard feeding the little chickens, or Sarah Lib in the doorway, or Mary Jane at a window would call to her to come in a minute or two, Olive went on her way down to the spring. The clear water bubbled up and pushed its way out over a narrow pebbly bed, then widened into a brook where water-cresses grow; she followed the brook, and stooped to pick a handful of the peppery green things, and went on tasting them, persuading herself that she was thinking only of the wild beauty about her and feeling only very glad and most thankful for the quiet days that had come to her! At the same time she was vividly conscious that she was playing at being satisfied. She knew she might have to make her satisfied what Christ had, and it was all He had—His Father’s will. She did not know whether she had it or not. She was sure

she would be satisfied if she knew she had it—whether she were happy or not. Were Diantha in a strait, she thought, smiling to herself, she would talk the matter over with her husband and daughter and mother and five sisters, and perhaps call the neighbors in. But—and down here, alone with the brook that with all its gurgling would never tell, she knew what the trouble was! Last night she had not been brave enough to face the truth; she was so much a woman, with all her man's way of paying the rent and the doctor's bill, that she had a woman's unreasonable reason for not knowing what to do next. And that woman's reason was Leila's father! Her "old" father! Her handsome, erect, broad-shouldered, black-headed quick-stepped old father, but twelve years—hardly twelve years—older than herself, whose house was her home that year of her illness, and long convalescence; she knew in her heart that his plan of taking her abroad was for her sake as well as Leila's. He had always been so sorry for her. He had never approved of her father; he had had no patience with her mother; he had influenced her uncle to bequeath to her the whole of his small savings; he had, with brotherly kindness, taken her into his

home that very day the physician said she must have a long rest or die; and now he would have her go to Europe for the sake of his daughter. Leila might have thought of it, but he had thought of it first. He had done enough for her; he should do no more. She was safe here at Diantha's; could not a woman who had taken care of herself all her life take care of herself at thirty-five? Sara Douglas could go! She would write to him and tell him that Miss Douglas would be a most desirable chaperone for his daughter. But would she? With the last peppery bit between her lips, she tramped back up the lane. Mary Jane, under her sunbonnet, was scolding Sarah Lib as they planted garden seeds together, and the old man was hobbling about in the sunshine.

Dr. Provost must have given up that secretaryship he was hoping for; this going abroad was second best; Leila cared more for the secretaryship; she did not care at all for traveling. Why could not her father leave her at home?

Miss Vanema was so serious at dinner that Diantha was confident that the telegram had not brought her good news. Menzies was serious too; he was tired of the country already.

"Di, if I can't find something to do, I'll go home."

"What can you do there?" she inquired, practically.

"That's the mischief of it."

"They don't want you growling and grumbling about."

"I'd like to see you with your right hand gone—or rather I wouldn't."

"It isn't gone. You have it to make strong; you have it to help itself with," she said impatiently. "Men can't be patient two minutes."

"I have been patient two minutes. Mollie's suggestion has upset me. I'm going home to find a man, or a mouse, or a long-tailed rat that can write a decent hand and will not ask too much for it."

"Is it a man's hand you want?" asked Diantha. "I suppose you think you have a woman's already."

That afternoon Olive sat at a window in her chamber writing to Harriet Peters; she lifted her head at the sound of carriage wheels; they stopped somewhere not far off. Goings and comings meant nothing to her, and she went on writing. The next instant her pen dropped, and she was on her feet. No one had a voice like Leila Provost!

"Is Miss Vanema here?" the voice was asking.

"Oh, yes," answered Diantha, on the piazza, "she is here in the house, if she isn't in the woods or out in the fields."

Leila had pushed the carriage door open and was springing out as Miss Vanema appeared on the piazza.

"Leila Provost!" was all she could exclaim.

"Have I frightened you to death? I am not any thing if I am not sudden. Papa hurried me off himself—he was afraid you would be worried about his letter—so when his letter came last night, he said he would send me or a telegram to-day. I preferred to be the telegram. I'm dying to get into the country. May I send the carriage back and stay over a train?"

"Certainly," said Diantha, who had edged her way in between the two. "I shall be glad if you will stay all night; we have plenty of room. Miss Vanema has been blue to-day; she looks a lighter color already."

"Then I'll give this man a telegram to papa and stay. Thank you; you are very kind."

She was a little creature; at the first glimpse of her as she sat in the carriage, Diantha thought she

was deformed; she was hollow chested and round shouldered, with colorless cheeks, large gray eyes, sunken under the well-defined brows, and projecting forehead; she laughed as she talked; her words came out twinkling. Her voice was like the tinkle of a silver bell.

"I would walk five miles to hear that girl talk five minutes," decided Menzies, behind his newspaper on the piazza.

Leila told the rest of it as she stood with Miss Olive in her chamber unbuttoning her gloves and long cloak.

"Papa's letter came—the secretaryship, you know—somebody has died, and they want him immediately; he is delightedly satisfied with it; so am I. I hate to travel, unless to be with him. And that study that was wearing him to death, for the book wouldn't be a success, and he's beginning to believe it himself, and keeping on out of sheer self-will and nervousness. I hate books, and people that write them, and people that read them, for I *had* to work with papa, and I knew his work was wasted, and the disappointment of it would break his heart and mine! And now I'm too happy for any thing, for he'll make a splendid secretary, and

I'll cremate that pile of manuscript and never have another trouble as long as I live. And you haven't got to chaperone me, unless it's about the streets of my native town or here in this beautiful country. How did you ever find such a Garden of Eden? And your hostess is a beauty, with her snapping black eyes and smooth, shining hair."

The merry light was brightening the brown of Olive's eyes; she looked like the happiest woman in the world; lifting both hands, she exclaimed, in a comical tone of profound reflection,

"Oh, why did I not last night sleep the sleep of the philosopher? All one has to do is not to decide, and life will be decided for you."



IV.

UNDER THE APPLE TREES.

"Some things God gives often ; some He gives only once."
—GEIKIE.

"I SAY, Miss Vanema !"

Miss Vanema was not at all surprised at the doctor's greeting ; he was a rough and ready sort of young fellow, and the words and heartiness of the tone were like him.

She was sitting on the piazza with a book in her hand ; a book was a companion, open or shut ; this book had been shut for an hour, while she sat thinking.

At the breakfast table Mr. Menzies had told the girls that he had found the place where the wild forget-me-nots grew, and as soon as Mollie's morning work was done, the three had started off together. That was an hour ago, and during this hour she sat on the piazza with her book unopened, thinking.

It was a very long time since she and Allan Menzies searched for wild forget-me-nots together; she was young then—like these girls.

The doctor was coming around the house; he ran up the piazza steps and stood looking at her with a hand in each pocket.

“Do you believe in the One who made you?”

He waited for a reply.

“Yes,” she said, grave and startled.

“Then show it by leaving yourself alone and letting Him have His way with you. He knows how you are made, even better than I do—and I know enough to know that you haven’t the vitality you had two weeks ago. If you want to do good work to the end of your days, and at the end of your days—and that kind of timber is in you—don’t spoil it by losing your vim now. You are in danger, I warn you. I know the signs. Put yourself out to grass; there’s good pasture here. When you are seventy-five you will tell me you are glad of it; will you do it?”

“Yes,” promised Olive, in a flash of decision.

“Good! Put it there.”

He pulled his right hand out of his pocket and

held his palm out to her ; smiling, she laid her hand in his, and he grasped and held it firmly.

“ Say ‘ I give you my word, Dr. Clymer.’ ”

She repeated : “ I give you my word, Dr. Clymer.”

“ Now it is signed, sealed, and delivered. Thank you immensely. You knew it before I told you, or you wouldn’t have given in so. You think about other folks, and somebody will think about you. Don’t you go in the house, unless to eat and sleep—not even when it rains. Put on your rubbers and waterproof, and tramp. Good day.”

It was two weeks to-day since Leila’s voice broke in upon that letter to Harriet Peters ; she had taken up her abode in the old house, in the nook that looked out into the top of the apple trees. Leila and her Saratoga trunk filled her chamber at Diantha’s. Diantha had covered the lounge with pretty cretonne, and Mollie had brought several useful little things into the room, and Leila had asked to have the carpet taken up and one or two rugs laid down.

The apple blossoms were blown away ; this morning Olive was thinking that some of her heart must have blown away with them, for she felt

listless, and life seemed not worth keeping hold of. Her two windows looked out into a world of green leaves. She took her meals at Diantha's and at all hours vibrated between her two homes.

"I'll browse like the sheep in the pasture," she thought, with a sigh of relief. "I suppose somebody had to tell me. I couldn't tell myself."

Then she held herself still in utter dismay; now she could not ask Allan Menzies to let her do his copying; she had been screwing her courage up for the two weeks, and had decided to speak to him when he returned from this walk; but her promise had bound her—she must not study, or read, or work.

Bending over manuscript day after day, writing rapidly and nervously, as she was confident she would do, would not be putting herself out to pasture. Voices were in the lane; Mollie went in at the side door; Menzies and Leila came around the corner of the house; Leila dropped down on the lowest step of the piazza; he paused a moment beside her, and then ran up the steps and stopped in the doorway.

Mollie was at work in the dining-room, at work and singing.

Leila looked up at Miss Olive and smiled; out here in the country the words of the singing seemed sweet and strong.

“ ‘ What can I give Him,
Poor as I am ?
If I were a shepherd,
I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man
I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him ?
Give my heart.’ ”

When the singing ceased, Leila spoke :

“ We have been talking.”

“ When haven’t you been talking ? ” asked Olive.

“ Mr. Menzies has been telling us some things we didn’t know. He likes ignorant people because he can talk to them—wisely,” she said with a saucy laugh. “ I believe he doesn’t know the rest so I forbear to question him. He said that many suits of armor in the Tower of London would be a tight fit for the boys of to-day, boys of sixteen. I’m glad I didn’t live in those days, and have to admire that kind of men. My father is six feet two, almost as tall as Washington, and weighs over two hundred. Isn’t he splendid, Miss Olive ? ”

“ Is that his fighting weight ? ” asked Menzies.

"And he said, also," continued Leila, not deigning to notice the interruption, "that the old Greek stone coffins are half a head too short for the average modern man."

"Is that all he said?" inquired Olive, meeting the amused gray eyes as they looked down on the little figure on the lowest step.

"He said the British soldier finds his hand cramped on the hilt of the crusader's cross-hilted sword."

"And that gives you a contempt for Scott's heroes, you mite of a thing!" said Olive.

"I shall put it in my journal for papa. O, Miss Olive, he's gone West. I had two letters this morning. I knew he would start off as soon as he was rid of me. But he will want me by and by as his clerk in that handsome little office, and I won't go."

Would she dare—she had not thought of it before—would she dare suggest to Leila that Mr. Menzies was miserable for want of a copyist?

"I wish you were my daughter," said Menzies.

"Oh, no," said the girl, measuring him with her critical and laughing eye. "You are not half tall enough. I can stand under my father's arm."

"Then I am sure he can make you mind ; I have doubted it before," he retorted as he went in.

Leila meditated before she spoke again, then she said :

"Miss Olive, I do not think Mr. Menzies is a happy man. I feel as if he were always trying to forget something."

"And never forgetting ?"

"Oh, yes ; but he remembers oftener than he forgets. He is a silent man, with all his talking. He makes himself talk to keep from thinking. I don't like him ; he hasn't any tenderness."

Bending her head forward Leila drew her knees up to her chin and clasped them with both small, tanned hands.

Diantha said she was an ugly little piece. She was looking at Mollie when she said it and speaking to Menzies ; but then Mollie was such a little beauty.

Every attention Cousin Menzies paid to Leila, Diantha felt was taken from Mollie, and, directly or indirectly, resented it.

Leila meditated awhile, then spoke again :

"My Cousin Andrew—my other letter was from him—says that my letter has decided him to

come here if our hostess can make room for him. I told him her boarders had the choice of two houses, beside all outdoors. He can walk to and from the station; it is lonely for him at home, now we are all away, he was as blue as indigo after you left. Our old Bertha doesn't take pains for one, and the evenings are long beside, and he never will go out evenings alone. Do you think I may venture to ask Mrs. Di to take more of us in. She is perfectly capable of it. We shall have him to take us around the two weeks of his vacation. Mr. Menzies is engaged; Mrs. Di took endless pains to go into details. Perhaps she thought I would snap him up."

"You must have given Mr. Croft a rose-colored view of our life here," remarked Olive, with lips perceptibly paling.

"It was all greenness. I never so bathed my very soul in greenness before. You won't care if he comes, will you?" asked Leila, still hugging her knees. "He's as convenient as a hammock; you can slip out of him, and he stays put and never minds. He will amuse the unhappily engaged man, which is as bad, in a lesser degree, as being unhappily married," Leila ran on in a gleeful voice. "I don't amuse him."

Then Leila did not know, or did she? You never could tell what Leila knew.

Andrew Croft must be bravely over his foolishness, or hopeful; she thought he was not hopeful.

"I think Mrs. Di will be glad to take him. She has a frugal mind; and she wants a new parlor carpet, a set of china, a black silk dress, and to send Mollie to the city this winter for a few finishing touches. I might give the finishing touches to her, but she doesn't seem to admire my manners."

"Miss Maria remarked this morning that they have a bedroom down-stairs which is used as a storeroom, and if Diantha would have another boarder she would clear it out," remarked Olive.

"I suppose the old folks have something for the lodgers," said Leila; "it is quite a scheme, and you originated it."

The heavy step of Mr. Menzies was in the hall; Leila did not change her position; Mr. Menzies was such an old bachelor that she was as easy with him as with her father, and as rude; accustomed to the society of gentlemen, having entertained her father's friends since she was fifteen, she had the air of a wise little woman of the world; Dian-

tha said she behaved more like forty than nineteen.

"The old Indian complained that the paleface, especially women, died of too much house; he could not bring that charge against you two," said Menzies, stationing himself again in the doorway.

"Out of doors doesn't wear your uncasiness off," observed Leila, straightening herself. "Life is an iron cage and you walk up and down in it."

"Nothing but my work will quiet me," he answered gloomily. "I feel like a lion robbed of its young."

Leila studied his face for an instant, then she burst out in her sudden fashion :

"Don't you want somebody to lend a hand ? I have a good right hand at your service, sir."

"You do not mean it !" he exclaimed. "I dare not hope you mean it."

"I never offered my hand to a gentleman before," she said ruefully, gazing down at her morsel of a hand, "and it is not much to offer."

"Miss Leila, how can I thank you ! But one day's work will only upset me."

"I will do twenty, forty, one hundred, if you like."

"When will you begin?"

There was no mistaking the resolute tone; the girl was in earnest.

"It is to be a business arrangement. You need not be grateful or thank me one word. I shall set my own price. I always do when I write for papa. I shall be ready in three minutes—as soon as I have cleansed my hands."

With a jump up the steps like a little girl, she was standing before him.

"But it must be done out of doors. I cannot be shut up in the house. This piazza is west; we can work here mornings. I will copy for you from half-past eight until twelve every morning. I write faster than Miss Olive, even, and more plainly. I was afraid you would ask her."

"I wouldn't dare," he said, not looking at Miss Olive. "I asked her something one day, and then she refused."

Did he remember that? They were out in a sudden shower; he had a cough in those days, and she would not allow him to take off his light overcoat and throw it over her shoulders. But had he forgotten something else? She had persistently refused when he had begged to write to her; she had re-

fused and had given no reason. Had he forgotten ? Or was he thinking of that drive to Laurel Lane ?

"And I asked her something else—afterward."

It was something to her that he had not forgotten, although it made no difference after fifteen years ; it made no difference then, after awhile ; her mother and father would have been very angry.

"I suppose Di has a table to lend us. Di ! Dianth ! Diantha !" he called, raising his voice with each added syllable.

"Human hands never *are* clean," said Leila, spreading her soiled fingers before his eyes. "From a scientific standpoint it is impossible, and we are nothing if we are not scientific ; we must even be scientifically clean ; even after such cleansing they return to their former untidiness on being tested by a towel. I love to dig in the earth with my fingers ; it is such clean dirt. Do you know somebody defines dirt as matter misplaced ? A strawberry on a white apron is dirt."

"Yes," he said "and a right, natural human regret under some conditions may be a sin. Diantha ! Diantha !" he called in his musical bass.

"Miss Olive, do you know—" Leila seemed

bent on giving information, "that a person at eighty has changed his nails two hundred times at least. Your dainty finger-tips have always been my envy. Mr. Menzies, what do you expect of such digits? My fingers are dirty, and I bite my nails."

"Good work," he returned sententiously. "The beauty of utility. I have seen a page of yours; nothing could suit me better, not even my own."

"It will be a mercy to me; I am drooping for an occupation," said Leila, still regarding her finger-tips, and thinking her own thoughts about these two people.

"Goethe says that perfect health of mind and body depends upon the pursuit of some practical occupation, and that brain workers should counteract the one-sided tendency of study by an amateur carpenter shop or a thriving little farm," Menzies returned, also regarding her finger-tips; then raising his voice again, "Diantha! Ho, Diantha!"

"Dear me!" cried Diantha's voice at the head of the stairway, "is the house a fire?"

"I am—with an idea. Bring a table."

.

"A *table!*" repeated Diantha, hurrying down the stairs, "what on earth—"

"Miss Leila has promised to work with me every morning out here on the piazza, with your kind permission."

"H'm," ejaculated Diantha, looking sharply at Miss Leila. "Can she punctuate?"

"No," said Leila, wickedly, "she can only ejaculate."

Stifling the "h'm" on her lips, Diantha asked what kind of a table would suit him.

"That one in the dining-room, in the corner, with things on it; get them off, and I'll get it out."

Leila flew off to put her hair and hands in order and to get the only pen she could write with; she would find out what this silent man was made of, and that would be reward enough for a dozen busy mornings. While Diantha was crowding the "things" off the table into her big gingham apron, she was telling Mollie, who stood looking on, that *that* Miss Leila was a forward little thing, and had designs of some kind—she knew it by her eyes. Mollie's reply was a good-humored laugh; that laugh sweetened her mother more than either of them ever suspected.

The first morning of work on the piazza was a brilliant success, if success might be indicated by the hilarious mood of the two workers at the twelve o'clock dinner.

With Leila at the table, the meals were quite another affair ; Diantha still talked every instant ; but every body listened to Leila.

"Are you paid by the hour ?" Diantha inquired as the quick "Amen" of the blessing dropped from her husband's lips.

"Yes," said Leila, demurely, "if virtue is its own reward. If virtue is its own reward, I don't see why vice isn't its own and only punishment, Miss Olive," she added, appealing to the lady at her side.

"It is," replied Diantha, emphatically, who always considered herself the person addressed.

"Then why should there be any other place of punishment ?" argued Leila, rebelliously.

"Why should there be any other place of reward ?" asked Diantha, in quick demand.

Leila appealed to Miss Olive with her eyes, but Miss Olive's eyes reproved her, and she would make no reply.

"I think the folks who are satisfied with this

world as hell, to be consistent, should be satisfied with this world as Heaven," said Diantha, looking hard at Miss Vanema, thinking perhaps she had struck a blow at the root of her heterodoxy.

But Miss Vanema's eyes never saw anything she did not wish to see.

As she was passing into the entry, after dinner, Diantha stepped up behind her and lifted her hand to her shoulder.

"Miss Vanema, I *wish* you were a Christian," she said with feeling.

A shiver went through Olive.

"Thank you," she said very gently, freeing herself from the sympathetic touch.

With a snap in her eyes Diantha drew back and Olive passed through the entry. Diantha watched her as she went through the back yard and entered the broad doorway of the old house.

The sorrowful brown eyes did not fill; Olive's heart was too hurt for tears. For six weeks she had been with that woman, living her life under keenest inspection, and yet she did not know that she had been with Jesus, that she loved Him with all the strength of her life, and was trying to learn His will and do it with all her might.

How utterly she had failed! What would any spoken word be after such failure?

"She is very touchy," Diantha remarked to Mollie, as they scraped the dinner plates together; and then, forgiving her with effort, she resolved to pray for her every night when she said her prayers.

"Mollie, perhaps we can get her to go to the school-house, if she will persist in not going to church."

"What do you want to *get* her to do anything for, mamma?" asked Mollie, impatiently.

"Because she is a soul under my roof—a soul to be saved," said the conscientious little woman, sternly.

Mollie did not reply, but she scraped the plate in hand with unnecessary vigor. Miss Vanema said lovely things, if her mother only knew!

"There goes Menzies with a book, and that Leila after him. I *told* her about Virginia."

"Mamma, that's mean!" exclaimed Mollie, provoked. "I would be ashamed to have a daughter if I thought girls were like that."

"You will never know human nature, child. It comes by nature. You are like your father—as

blind as a bat. You may go, too, and hear him read; I'll do the dishes," said Diantha, trotting out into the kitchen with the pile of plates. Leila's voice was under the window—

"Mollie! Mollie!"

Mollie's radiant face was pushed out among the vines. Leila's companionship was a pleasure to her the live-long day.

"Come as soon as you can. He's got *Aurora Leigh*. We will not begin till you come. We're going under the apple trees."

"Oh, thank you," cried Mollie, delightedly. "You knew I wanted that. But it will be a full hour. There's the dishes!"

"I'll help you!"

"Oh, no," said Mollie, dismayed. "Mamma would never let you."

"We'll talk till you come."

"But I want to hear the talk."

"Then we won't. We won't even breathe till you come."

One laugh went into the hot kitchen, and the other laugh went down the lane to the hammock under the apple trees.

"Mollie, the corn is up," announced her father from the kitchen doorway.

"Is it?" Mollie returned carelessly.

He turned away with a frown, disappointed that his daughter had no lively interest in his farm-work, his planting, his reaping, his orchard, and his fine cattle; it had never occurred to him to take a lively interest in the things of her life, in the few books she read, (borrowed books, for he saw no use in buying books) in the pretty fancy work she did when her mother saved money to buy the materials out of the weekly churning. When she was happy, he knew it, because she sang about the house; when she was disappointed, he never guessed it, for she still sang about the house.

Mollie hurried with the dishes, and Leila swung in the hammock, while Menzies lay on the grass, with his hands clasped under his head, and talked or did not talk, as his mood moved him.

In her own room Olive was battling with herself. She was making herself hold to her promise. An afternoon of study was alluring! How could she let herself slip through her own fingers with all this busy life about her? She was like the man waiting at the pool while others were continually step-

ping down before him. Her days would be more a hardship than she dared face. Watching Leila at work for Allan Menzies, she had almost envied the two absorbed workers. It was more than hard—unbearable, to watch her doing what she would rather do than do anything else in the whole world. She would not sit and watch them through another morning.

Before that money came she had not had time to be idle and see others work; she wished that money had not come? Did she wish Leila had not come? Did she wish her youth back again—that youth with no opportunities for herself; that youth when others stepped in before her—not that youth back again, but a youth like Leila's; and she had had summer days like these, when Allan Menzies was young, too; but now it was Mollie and Leila under the trees with him, and Olive Vanema had grown middle-aged and could not laugh at nothing, as they did. He was laughing with them; he had not outgrown them; he had Virginia Graham, and she had—nobody. She had not even herself, for she had failed in being the self she hoped to be; her hidden life had been so hidden that Diantha did not know. If the hidden life be

pictured in the face, was her face that face ? And that night before Leila came, she was glad that she was sweet to look upon. Allan Menzies had not come back into her life then. Now anxiety was sharpening her eyes, care thinning her cheeks, thought-taking writing tiniest lines in brow and cheek. Did a life hidden with Christ wear the face into this ? No wonder Diantha wished she were a Christian. The life with Christ was hidden, and she had to make it a glorious hiding-place by showing in her open life the glory of it.

The voices under her window down under the thicket of green leaves, the bass and the silver tinkle, brought her back to their world again. She must live in their world. Mollie's laugh sweetened her as it did her mother; this girl had no envy or sinful regret; she rejoiced in her youth, she was not held back; she stepped down with the others.

"I don't believe many men *could* be as good as that," Leila was bringing forth in her positive tone from out the store of her small wisdom. "Are they, Miss Olive ?" she inquired, as Miss Olive stepped over the grass to her.

"No," said Miss Olive, with the sunshine again in her eyes, "only women are as good as that."

"Why, did you hear?" questioned Mollie, surprised.

"Oh, no, I only said what Leila expected me to say."

"She was telling us about some one she knew, the saddest story!" said Mollie.

The world was full of sad stories to Mollie.

"Leila always has a story," Olive returned.

"Because papa knows so many people," said Leila, rolling herself out of the hammock to put Miss Olive into it. "You look so pretty in it, and I'll tuck you in like a baby."

"What is the story?" Olive asked, suffering Leila to tuck her in like a baby.

"Arthur Croft."

Olive knew about Arthur Croft. Leila had told the story to Mollie; even if Mr. Menzies listened, she was not concerned. Arthur had been engaged to the sister of a college friend, the plainest, most unattractive sort of girl—not that she could help that, Leila admitted, magnanimously, but she *could* help making Arthur know that she admired him, and making him think that he was bound to her. He was there a great deal, of course, weeks at a time, and she took it all to herself, when it was for

her brother ; and before he knew it, the brother congratulated him, taking it for granted, because his sister acted so, and he never contradicted, but let it go on, for her sake ; and afterward she wouldn't release him ; and she pretended to have the heart of a woman, and then she did release him, but he died a year afterward, and she had spoiled his life, as far as she selfishly could. She hated to be a girl, when she knew there were such girls in the world !

" But think of such men ! " said Olive.

" Such weak men ! " exclaimed Leila, contemptuously. " I pity and reverence a man as strong and as weak as that. Arthur was so refined, so unselfish, always looking at life from some one else's standpoint and never having any of his own to stand on."

" That is the kind of men who do such things," said Olive.

" It's very dangerous to have such men around," retorted Leila, with her tinkle of a laugh. " They might sacrifice themselves to you before you knew it. I would like to write a story with such a man and woman in it."

Menzies turned his head to look at her.

"How would you end it?" he asked, in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Just as I believe the Lord would, if He wrote it according to His truth," she answered, dropping her lightness.

"How would that be?" he asked, amused and interested in her way of putting it.

Mollie was not amused; she was trying to lose herself in *Aurora Leigh*.

"I would end it right, even if it began wrong and went on wrong," she answered vehemently.

"Suppose it would kill her to know," cried Mollie, passionately.

"Let it kill her then. She might better die than live believing a lie and helping somebody to live a lie. She steals something that isn't meant for her in the first place."

"No," said the quiet voice in the hammock, "she only takes what she thinks is meant for her."

"Then you are on *her* side," said Mollie, eagerly.

"I am so sorry for girls," Olive said.

"So am I," said Menzies.

And then Leila repented that she had accused him of having no tenderness.

"But she snatches it—she doesn't wait to know,"

Leila went on. "But I don't believe she *would* die. A girl that would do such a thing wouldn't be the kind to die. And then I don't believe God *lets* the truth kill people. It is the lies that kill. Just think of a man being so afraid to speak the truth that he will let his lie curse himself and not bless her. As if God couldn't take care of the truth after it was spoken; as if He couldn't be trusted with it. He could have made Arthur love her, but He did not; and then he was afraid to tell her the truth as God made her. What is the use of having your heart in God's keeping if you will not use it as He makes it and keeps it?"

"Perhaps your friend did not believe that," said Menzies, "then he could not act upon it."

"He thought he made his own heart and kept it himself, you mean, and had a right to play false with it? I don't believe he thought any farther, at first, than to save her pain; and that's a very weak way of doing. I wouldn't trust any one who thought only of that. How would I ever know when he was telling me the truth? It has to come out; all the sorrow and suffering of the lie; and then who saves pain? Don't you see it is the way of making pain? And such pain that never could have been

but for that! Suppose it goes on, and after marriage she finds it out. A girl must be very blind and not know what love is not to see through the make-believe. He never kissed her once, he told me so."

With his face turned from her, Menzies was watching a scarlet bird with black wings as it flew from one tree-top to another.

"He had a very sweet, gentle nature," Olive said, after a moment. "I believe his death was hastened; one can suffer himself into lung trouble."

"And all for want of a little bravery and common sense!" cried Leila, vehemently. "I can't talk about it, it makes me too angry."

"Then we will read," said Menzies, "talk is hollow stuff. Mollie, give me the book, dear, and don't break your heart over Miss Leila's hero. Every man has not a consumptive tendency; if he had had an absorbing occupation to throw himself into, he wouldn't have had any lungs."

"But he wouldn't be happy just the same," said Mollie, handing him the book.

"A man who lives to be happy defeats his own end," said Menzies, in the tone that had no tenderness in it.

"But a man who lives to be *true* doesn't," retorted Leila. "Miss Olive, would you respect such a man?"

"I think I would love him," said Olive, in her sure voice. "I know God is so sorry for the two that He will help them both."

The scarlet bird was flying overhead, away up overhead where the God dwelt of whom this sure voice was speaking. Menzies did not know Him, nor Jesus Christ whom He has sent. He was far up overhead.

The voices went on talking; he did not heed them, he was far back in one June afternoon when Olive Vanema had been crying; the letters from home usually made her cry; he had been tempted to toss this letter into the brook, and let it float down the stream and get tangled among the tall grasses and never make anybody cry; he stood on the bridge and looked down into the water and thought about it; to-day was her last day, he might keep it till morning and not give it to her until he said good-bye. If he did, would it make any difference? But she would come down to the gate to meet him and ask if he had her letter. He knew the writing on the envelope; it was that rascally

father of hers who would not lift his hand to support his invalid wife and young daughter; he was waiting for the position his "talents and education" fitted him for; that position was the almshouse, and he would give a dollar to tell him so. Olive had repeated her father's words to him in her innocent voice, and he had mentally kicked him, for her sake. The summer term closed that day, and she had to go home and work untiringly the long vacation through. This country school had been her vacation, she said; in autumn she would have a position in the city, in the grammar school; Dr. Provost had influence with the board of education and had got it for her; she was twenty, and had been teaching two years, at first as governess to three small boys on the next block, and her mother was pleased with that, for then she was at home before two o'clock; her mother did not like this country school; her uncle had sent her here, and she had to stay, and he guessed the force of the "had," for who else would pay her father's bills? Not that old skinflint, his brother. Her father must have some money; the ninety dollars she earned this summer would not pay many bills. Her dress in the warm weather was gingham, her best dress,

she seemed to have but one other, a brown thick one, that she wore in cool and rainy weather.

The letter did not float down stream ; he kept it in his hand ; the gingham dress was at the gate, and her hand was outstretched for the letter.

(She had asked permission to stay one week longer, and have it for a *real* vacation ; her board would be but two dollars and a half, and then she would go home and do housework and fancy work to sell until school opened in September. But of course Allan Menzies did not know this.)

She took the letter, but she would not open it ; she talked a moment or two lightly and nervously, and then ran up-stairs to her room to read it by herself.

He stayed out in the front yard until Aunt Betsey came to the kitchen door and rang her small bell ; he could see Aunt Betsey now in her afternoon calico and smooth, iron gray hair.

"Come, boy," she called.

That April he had gone into the country with his books ; he had a cough then—he had been troubled very little with it since. Aunt Betsey said that summer cured him, that and the mullein leaves she steeped for him and made him drink.

He would miss this girl ; he remembered how he leaned over a broken place in the fence and thought about her ; it was not what she did, for she did nothing that other girls did not do ; it was not what she said, for she was not as " lively " as some girls, and not quick at repartee ; it was what she was, that touched him. She was not the prettiest girl in the village church ; the girl in the pew in front had finer eyes ; it was the look in Olive Van-ema's brown eyes that would not let you forget her.


She had been crying, her eyelids were red, he saw her as she came down the narrow kitchen stairway at the sound of the bell at the foot of the stairs.

It was a cosy tea-table—only three. He was sure Aunt Betsey put more than the usual amount of cream in her tea, because she could do nothing else for the girl with the reddened eyelids.

He had spoken of Laurel Lane and taken it for granted that she would take the long walk with him in the sunset, coming back in the late twilight.

" I cannot go," she said, and her voice was not clear of tears.

He urged her and Aunt Betsey urged her, but she only said she could not go. She had her trunk



to pack, and two letters to write to girls who had not been at school that last day.

He was angry, and she saw that he was angry.

After her packing was over she came down to the sitting-room, Aunt Betsey told him, and when she asked her if she were sorry to go, the girl burst into tears. Aunt Betsey said she didn't believe she had ever had much fathering and mothering.

The next morning he saw her alone at the breakfast table, while Aunt Betsey was fussing about, and asked her if she would write to him once in a while. The summer had been very pleasant, and she had made it pleasanter. But she said "No," in that quiet way of hers, not caring how disappointed he was, and he started off before the stage came and was back only in time for a hurried good-bye and to help the driver stow her trunk away on the back of the stage. Could it be fifteen years? She had held her own better than he had; but for her hair, and it was as pretty as a picture, no one would guess her age. Her rascally father was dead, her invalid mother, and skinflint of an uncle; Leila's father seemed to be the only relative she had in the world, and he was not near enough

to have any name that came by blood or marriage—in fact, he was not a relative at all.

He would like to speak of Laurel Lane and see if she remembered. But if she did or did not, what mattered it? What mattered anything concerning this woman to the man engaged to be married to Virginia Graham.

Would she love the man who could do the thing Arthur Croft did? He was near despising him.

"Miss Vanema, did you ever see laurel?" Mollie was asking.

"No," Miss Vanema, replied.

"It's the prettiest stuff—the blossom and the flower. I want to get some, to paint."

"Mollie, heart's dearest, you shall have some to paint! Where can I discover it?" cried Menzies tragically, lifting herself up from the grass.

"I don't know. I wish I did."

"You'll know some day," said Leila. "I always get what I want. Don't you, Miss Olive?"

"I can tell you better when I am a hundred," said Olive. "I surely expect to have it then."

"What is the loveliest thing that has happened to you to-day, Miss Olive?" continued Leila.

Olive knew. A thought. It came while the girls

were talking to each other. But she would not tell. It was this: because others stepped down before that man waiting at the pool, Jesus came to him.

How glad he must have been that he was not one of those who stepped down!

V.

IRONING DAY.

"Oh what men dare do! What men may do!
What men daily do, not knowing what they do!"

—SHAKESPEARE.

ONE of Diantha's strongest reasons for doing a thing was that she had made up her mind to do it. She had made up her mind to push Mollie. She had made up her mind to push Mollie this summer. Mollie was nineteen, nearly twenty; *she* was married on her seventeenth birthday; Mollie had been sent away to school; she had had advantages; they should be made to pay.

Mollie should be married, and rich and happy; she would work for it, and pray for it—as much as she dared; she did not dare very far; she could push Mollie, she could not push Providence.

"David," she said to her husband at five o'clock

one morning the last week in June, "I must hunt around and get a girl."

"A girl!" he repeated, shoving his foot into the boot he had left under the kitchen stove to dry the night before.

"Yes, a girl!" she emphasized, putting the kindlings into the stove. "A girl to wash and iron and help generally."

"I thought you had Mollie," he said, giving his boot a pull.

"Mollie! She is your daughter!"

He laughed good-humoredly at the concentration of sharpness and scorn in her tone, and went out to the wood-shed for an armful of wood.

To-day was Tuesday, ironing day. Mollie ironed all day in the hot kitchen; her mother had promised her three dollars a week as long as the boarders stayed. Mollie wished they would stay a year. She loved to do ironing; she loved to do everything that had any housekeeping in it.

As Leila sat writing on the piazza, she heard her singing over her ironing table; she stopped writing for a moment to listen. Menzies was searching for a reference in a big book, and did not reprove the pause. Leila thought the music

must be the girl's own, something she had learned from the birds at their housekeeping in the apple trees :

“ ‘ The good housekeeper,
How can I tell her ?
By her cellar,
Cleanly shelves and whitened walls.
I can guess her
By her dresser,
By the back staircase and hall,
And with pleasure
Take her measure,
By the way she keeps her brooms;
Or by peeping
At the keeping
Of her back and unseen rooms ;
By her kitchen's air of neatness,
And its general completeness,
Where in cleanliness and sweetness
The rose of order blooms.’ ”

Leila laughed and went on writing. She had never seen a girl like Mollie Van Der Zee.

Menzies was lost in his work and did not appear to notice either the singing or the laughter ; had Olive been there she would have seen that he took note of both ; unconsciously she had fallen into that old way of studying changes in his face and

voice. She found enough to study; he was even more interesting than he had been when he was thin and smooth-faced: he had not changed, he had developed. If the old boy-and-girl times could come back, how she would enjoy a long talk! She had not yet found some one to talk to to her heart's content.

The "girls" in the old house were busier than usual to-day; beside the ironing, there was the storeroom to clean out and put in order for Diantha's new boarder, that rich young Mr. Croft.

Diantha was having a lively time with new folks this summer. Mary Jane hoped it would come to something. Hannah knew it would come to one thing: sore feet and tired backs. The one window of this small bedroom looked out into the back yard; the floor was bare, rough, uneven; the cracked walls were whitewashed, the ceiling broken in several places. Leila stood on the threshold and laughed.

"Andrew, the dainty, the fastidious, the refined, would that you could see it!"

"You wait!" said Hannah, pushing her aside with her elbow.

Leila waited. An hour before supper time

Hannah called to her over the back yard fence to come and see.

"Oh, how sweet, how clean, how nice! Why, how pretty!" exclaimed Leila, on the threshold.

"Miss Vanema, she helped!" said Hannah.

"She found things that I shouldn't have thought of putting in! Old things, in the closets and up garret and in the back yard. She put up that little shelf herself, and that white stuff around the table, and she made the curtain."

"With the window open, and the door into the hall, and the back door wide open to let all nature in, he'll be cool enough and have room enough," commented Leila. "I'd like to exchange with him. He said he was willing to rough it; I don't call this roughing it! Miss Hannah, you have been two fairies."

Miss Hannah's white, tired face beamed. There was the milking to do yet; she and Sarah Lib did the milking and churning for fifteen cows; before Leila came to look at the changes, she told Maria she was too beat out to put a foot into the cow-yard. Hannah's thin cheeks, large, faded blue eyes, and limp, short calico dresses were very pathetic to Leila.

"My cousin will be delighted," said Leila. "He has very simple tastes, luxurious fellow that he is. I wouldn't take this room away from him for anything. Newport and Saratoga will be robbed of their charms."

"Dianth gives us only a dollar a week for it—making the bed, clean towels and all—and only seventy-five cents for Miss Vanema's room, because she takes care of it herself."

"That's a shame!" cried Leila. "I wouldn't let her have it."

"It's better than nothing," returned Hannah. "I am to have the rent of both rooms for something I want."

Leila wondered what she could "want." If she were like this woman standing at her side, she thought she would desire nothing except to die and go to a world where there was something to have and look forward to.

As she went back through the yard, she stopped on the kitchen stoop to take a glass of buttermilk from the churn; Mollie was folding the last white piece of her day's work and saying to Mr. Menzies that the bottom of that clothes-basket was the prettiest sight she had seen to-day.

"You are the prettiest sight I have seen," he said, catching her in his arms and rumpling her white work, and then he whispered something that Leila did not hear.

With a low, joyful explanation, Mollie ceased her struggling to be free.

"O, Menzies, I'm *too* glad!"

"Never speak of it—I could not bear what would be said—I do not know how I am bearing it."

He knew that he had read the letter from Germany in the woods, standing in the path, and that then his knees had seemed to be giving out and he had fallen back and leaned against the trunk of a tree; it was but a moment, and he gained strength and walked on; his watch told him that he stood there two hours.

At the tea-table Diantha inquired when he had heard last from Germany.

"To-day."

"How is Virginia?"

"Better."

"*Better!* Really better!" she echoed. "How much better?"

"She has walked across the room twice. She kept the improvement as a surprise for me."

"Then she will be coming home and we shall have a wedding."

"She does not speak of coming home."

"Then you will be flying out there."

"Some day, perhaps," he answered in a happy voice.

"I thought something had happened to you. I never saw you look *just so*."

"I never felt just so."

And then Mollie laughed; there was something in the laugh so bewitching that everybody was bewitched and the laugh ran around the table.

"I suppose Lucy Ann would come over and help," remarked Diantha, as soon as she could obtain a hearing, and seeming to address the table. "I think I'll go over after supper and set the matter before her."

"Oh, what shall I do then?" asked Mollie. "I was getting rich."

"You shall have a good time," promised her mother. "You can be young but once."

"And I am getting on in years," said Mollie seriously.

"Is your cousin young or old, Miss Lella?" asked Diantha.

"Old," answered Leila, with the audacity of youth. "He is thirty-nine."

"It's hard to be so old," said Menzies, with a laughing look at Olive. "I'm sorry for old folks."

"Twenty years older than you are, Miss Leila," remarked Diantha, thinking that he was twenty years older than Mollie, also. But what was twenty years, when a man was in good health, and rich? Forty was the prime of life, for a man. And Mollie was a little old woman, so wise and thoughtful—that very day Menzies had said she would be a treasure to a man.

"Run out, child, under the trees with the rest," she said to Mollie after supper. "It's a pity if you can't have a vacation, too."

Mollie ran up-stairs to put on a pink muslin and to braid her hair over; then she looked down at her heavy shoes, and exchanged them for slippers with black velvet bows. Her mother gave her a look as she came into the kitchen for inspection and told her she would "do."

"She shall not stay here and grow like Hannah and Sarah Lib and Maria," her mother muttered, "all washed out and good-for-nothing; there's enough in the world for my little girl and she shall

have it. Her father might as well be a corn-cob for all the good he does her."

The three under the trees in the rustic chairs were having a good time, and Mollie was glad to be in it; for the evening she would play that she was a summer boarder! Her dress was as pretty as Leila's, and her slippers were prettier. Miss Vanema was saying something:

"A Japanese professor, he is in the Imperial University of Japan."

"What is his name?" interrupted Menzies.

"Toyamma," said Olive quickly, and Leila was sure she had invented the name on the instant.

"This professor thinks that Japanese girls should be instructed in reading, writing, conversation, music, needlework and housekeeping."

"And then she will make a good wife," added Menzies. "Did he say that?"

"Probably he was thinking of that. Men do," said Leila, "selfish things!"

"They have a right to think of it," maintained the man she was speaking to. "Aren't you on the man's side of the fight?"

"I am on my father's side."

"Whose side are you on, little Mollie?" asked

Menzies teasingly, drawing her down beside him ;
“it doesn't make much difference, you are such a mite.”

“I am on my own side; somebody has to be.”

“I didn't know you knew you had a 'side'—any more than the birds know it.”

That morning, seeing a redbreast swinging on a branch, Olive had said to herself (she could talk to herself to her heart's content)—“How happy that bird is with what the Lord said about it; if I were a bird and knew that, I'd be as happy as I want to be,” and then she had thought with indignation against herself, “As if He hasn't said more than that about me!”

But if she were a bird, and had her naughty human heart, she would be among the thickest of the leaves, and every leaf a care.

Mollie had no more care than the birds; she had not even learned it, to take it to heart, what the Lord said about the birds. Menzies kept his arm above her shoulder on the back of her chair; her glossy black head was against his cheek. She was interesting in herself; nothing had ever happened to her to make her interesting to anybody else.

"I like my life," she said comfortably. "I would like every summer to go on like this."

"Ironing days and all!" exclaimed Leila, who hated a kitchen. "Mr. Menzies, if you should guess what time it is, what time would you guess?"

"I should guess it was after the birds' bedtime. Have you read of Lord Stowell? He could state, so they say, the precise hour or minute without looking at a clock or any artificial means of measurement."

"Then he would have known how soon Andrew will be here. He is to come in the half-past seven train and walk through the woods. I gave him precise directions. He said Mrs. Di must not wait supper for him, as he might be later."

"Has he a hundred pounds of flesh to walk off?" asked Menzeis.

"I never saw such a walker! He has tramped through Europe. Have I told you? He did it with a college friend. He says he is looking for a wife to walk with him. I'm afraid he will not find her in America. Some stout-shoed Englishwoman may do."

"The Japanese professor didn't put that on his list," said Olive.

"He has thrown over that position in the bank," Leila went on discontentedly. "Aunt Wesie will only laugh. She doesn't see how she encourages him in idleness. Papa talks to her by the hour, and to him by the two hours. Aunt Wesie thinks his wife will redeem him out of his badness. He thinks he would like to be busy, and some friend—he has scores of friends—gets him something to do, and then he wearies for laziness and travel, and gives his employer notice that he intends to quit. Aunt Wesie is like him, in a woman's way; she will not keep house; last winter she was in Texas, and now she has gone to Alaska. She knows papa and I will always take him in. Now that he has Arthur's money in addition to his own, he is worse than ever. All he cares for is being happy, and he is never happy."

Menzies laughed, and Olive thought the laugh must have been blown across the sea from Germany.

"He is coming here to taste the sweets of poverty," said Olive. "I hope you gave him the dimensions of that room, Leila."

"Oh, I did. And our bill of fare!"

"Does he like *very* nice things to eat?" asked Mollie, with some anxiety.

"Very nice," repeated Leila, "and I don't know where he can get fresher and nicer. I hope your mother will charge him enough; he likes a great deal of waiting on."

"I shall have to do that. Be sure to tell me everything he likes."

"Never fear, he will tell you."

"What does he look like? Is he handsome?"

"All the men in our family are," Leila answered, proudly. "All the women are small and ugly, like me. They all marry small and ugly women, too, more's the pity."

"I wish he wasn't so old," said Mollie. "We never have anybody young come—only you. Last summer we had three old ladies."

"You must look on and see the old folks have a good time," advised Menzies.

"But it's our turn; you have had yours," remarked Leila. "You wouldn't like picnics and things?"

"I am thinking of a picnic," said Allan Menzies, "it was in prehistoric times. It was a school picnic—a country school picnic; a lot of boys and girls with their teacher. She was something of a kid, too; about as frisky as you two."

It rained about noon, and we had our dinner in somebody's barn—long boards were placed on barrels, and our only seats were peach baskets turned upside down. She baked cake the day before as merry as a kitten. She had merry brown eyes when they were not sad. She let me cut out the jumbles with a tin thing and bring in the wood; and we had the burnt hot ones to eat afterward in the wood-pile. That *was* fun! I don't wonder you pity thirty-niners, girls."

"I know how you grew old," said Leila. "How did she?"

"She didn't. She stayed young. She would like to sit on a wood-pile to-day and eat hot jumbles, only there isn't any wood-pile or any jumbles."

"There's Andrew!" cried Leila, starting up, discerning the familiar figure in the road. "Let's go to meet him. Come, Miss Olive."

But Miss Olive had an engagement; she had promised Miss Hannah that she would take a peep at her dairy to-night. Mollie darted in to inform her mother of the arrival, and at her bidding to get a pitcher of milk and the strawberry shortcake for the traveler.

"You are to do all such things, Mollie, all the pretty things and the waiting," reminded her mother, in nervous haste. "Your Aunt Lucy Ann is coming over every day from morning till night and you are not to do one bit of drudgery, but keep dressed up in your muslins in the afternoon and your light calico in the mornings; don't come into the kitchen, there's enough of other things to do, and stay out and have good times with Miss Leila whenever you can."

"O, mamma," said Mollie, gratefully, standing behind her and giving her a little kiss on the back of her neck, "you are as lovely to me as you can be."



VI.

BY THE SEA AND IN THE FIELD.

"Oh, how full of briars is this working-day world."

—SHAKESPEARE.

"There are two ways in which one nature may influence another for betterment—the one by strengthening the will, the other by heightening the ideal."

—GEORGE MACDONALD.

"It is as sweet as clover," remarked Olive, standing in the doorway of the spring-house and looking down.

"It takes a deal of work to keep it so," replied Hannah, straightening herself from the pan of milk she was skimming.

"It takes a deal of work to keep the old world going around," said Olive, merrily, "and yet we all love to give a push."

Hannah kept herself straight, with the skimming shell in her hand. "But a body gets dreadfully

tired of it all—that's why I want to earn money to get away."

"To get away from your nest of a home! Oh, how can you! With your dear old father and kind old mother!" cried Olive, with longing in her voice.

"I am not a child, I am a woman grown, and I've never had the thing I want."

Olive thought she wanted sunshine and rest and hope.

"You see," lowering her voice, confidentially, "we are so *poor*."

"I thought you were so rich."

"Rich in pans of milk and pounds of butter," was the contemptuous retort, as she glanced over the shelves; shifting her mental position, Olive stepped down and stood beside her; what was life from her standpoint? Jaded, heartsick, weary of the monotony of cow-yard and dairy, worn by the jangling of voices out of tune—thin, freckled hands, with protruding knuckles, cheeks wrinkled, not with age, but with the flesh that had fallen away, and that pathetic look in her large, pale blue eyes: what would life be to her if she were like that?

"Miss Hannah, you need to go out to pasture."

"I've had pasture all my life; I want to go where pavements are and brick walls and find work."

"Excuse me, but it is the pasture you haven't had! You are a country woman but you don't know how to enjoy the country."

"I don't see much to enjoy; it's all drudging, with nothing to show for it. I am forty-two—and what am I?"

Olive thought, but did not tell her that she was a poor, starved, lost sheep, with greenest pasture and stillest water all about her.

"Will you come up to my room a while?" she invited eagerly, as a thought came to her. "You shall rest in my cushioned rocker and I'll find something for you."

"Your room is a haven of rest; it will be like going out visiting. I don't go visiting as often as the girls; somehow I have lost heart."

"Then I'll go up and light the lamp; I love company; sometimes I am lonely up there."

The room was a haven of rest to Olive, with its cheescloth curtains tied back by green ribbons, the strip of rag carpet before the bed, her books and writing material on a cretonne covered pack-

ing-box that Hiram had got for her in town and she had covered herself, the rocker and the camp-chair, the bed, with its white tiny pillows and pink and white patchwork quilt, and then there was out in the tree-tops all day long, and at night, when she awoke, with the stillness and stars above them, or even when it was dark, there was the coolness and freshness and rustling.

Hannah's hair was beautiful, abundant and a rich mahogany in color, the heavy coil at the back of her head had loosened itself from its usual tightness, and pulling her sunbonnet off carelessly had rumpled the front into something like girlish prettiness over her low, pale forehead. A long white apron was her only attempt at "dressing up;" she brought her crocheting; she would feel fidgety if her hands were still.

"Well, I believe I *would* like it up here," she said, heartily, as Olive gave her the rocker. .

The lamp with its white shade on the green and white cretonne table gave the room the finishing touch of cosiness and comfort.

"You didn't know there were such possibilities in this small space," said Olive, bringing her camp-chair to the table. Her Bible was opened in

the light of the lamp ; that day she had been reading about Peter and the tax.

The blue eyes gave a hungry look toward the Bible. Miss Hannah had not learned how to read the Bible; she read her "chapter" every night, and sometimes it rested her.

"It does seem queer," said Olive, in the voice of going on with what they had both been thinking, "that when the Lord is so rich some of His disciples have to be so poor. I don't believe I knew until to-day how poor Peter was! I used to be poor; I am not rich now, but I do not have to work for money now as I have done almost all my life—even when I was a little bit of a girl I used to try to earn money, and I have been so poor that I hadn't five cents for car fare."

How Diantha would have been surprised at this frank avowal! how she would have been delighted to see Miss Vanema come out of herself! Hannah was not surprised; Miss Vanema had never seemed shut up to her; she listened like a child.

"Peter was the Lord's disciple and loved Him and went about with Him, giving up his daily work to be with Him and help Him when he could. When the tax—such a little sum—was demanded,

Peter had no money to pay. He told the Lord about it. And even He had no money to pay for Himself. The Lord who made all the earth and owned it, had not thirty cents ! ”

Hannah remembered that she had nine dollars and thirty cents in a box in her top drawer.

“ I suppose the Lord liked to be so poor,” she said, after thinking a moment.

“ Why do you think He liked it ? ” Olive asked.

“ Because He needn’t have been, He could have made all the gold He wanted out of nothing. Why did He like to be so poor ? ” she asked, with great interest.

Turning the leaves, Olive read—how she loved the words!—“ ‘ Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.’ He loved to be poor for our sakes. Now if we may only love to be poor for His sake ! ”

“ Are we poor for His sake ? ” inquired Hannah, staying her fingers, surprised and gladdened.

“ Could He make us rich if He chose ? ” asked Olive.

“ Hasn’t He made you rich ? ” was the quick, jealous retort.

"Yes, I am rich. As you think of me, I am very rich. I have things you would like to have, and I do not have to work to get them. He has made me rich. When He wanted me to be poor, He kept me poor. I did earn money, but it was not for myself, and it was not enough for what I had to do with it; one day my mother needed medicine and I had no money to buy it—and I could not always pay the rent, and many a day I had no lunch because I would not take the money to buy it when the money was needed more at home. My mother was ill for years and could eat only delicacies and food that cost more than cheap food. We had to buy bundles of wood for kindling; I used to save an old spool, if I found one, to help kindle the fire; and only my mother could have an egg for breakfast and I always drank my coffee without milk."

"That was being dreadful poor," exclaimed Hannah. "I never knew any one as poor as that."

"Now it is His will to make me rich, what you call rich, although when I want to give money away, I have to do without something I want. He had work for me to do when I was poor, and I am

sure He has work for me to do when I am rich. The work is for His sake, so the poverty or the riches are for His sake."

"Is the work for His sake, did you say?" inquired the hard-working woman, with an inflection of surprise.

"We work for those we love best, don't we?" Olive asked.

"Yes, I suppose so. I am saving to get a wheel-chair for ma. I suppose you love Him best, some folks do, and so you work for Him, as you call it."

"I do love Him best. I know I do. I am resting for His sake now, that I may be strong to work for His sake by and by."

It was not hard to speak of herself to this hungry-hearted woman.

"Did Peter get his money to pay the tax? I'd like to know that. Pa and Dianth always grumble about the tax bill."

Then Olive told her the story of the fishing and finding the money in the fish's mouth.

"It did some good to tell the Lord about it," remarked Hannah, after working meditatively for a minute. "I don't see why it doesn't now."

"Neither do I," said Olive, smiling. "I think Peter's plan is worth trying."

"But He wouldn't hear us like that and let us get money as easy," objected Hannah.

"How easy did Peter get it?"

"Why! as easy! By taking it out of the fish's mouth."

"How did he get the fish?" asked Olive, smiling.

But Hannah was not smiling.

"Why, I suppose—oh, did he go fishing for it?"

"The Lord told him to go to the sea—that may have been quite a walk, to cast a hook—he had to get that ready—and then bring up the fish, and then he had to open the fish's mouth and take it out. The Lord could have said: 'Look down in your hand, there's the money.' But He didn't. Peter was a fisherman, his work was fishing, the Lord told him to go to work—but the money, that was the miracle! Peter worked and the Lord spoke and it was done. You work and the Lord blesses your work. He loves work. He loves the work of the pasture and the dairy as well as the work of the sea. In the fish's mouth Peter found exactly the piece of money the Lord wanted;

enough for His tax and Peter's. He was working for himself—it was his own tax to be paid, and the Lord's, too! Oh, I am glad of that! I am glad he did that for his Master. You see, dear Miss Hannah, that He is willing for us to work for ourselves, and He gives us enough at the same time to have something for Him. Half was for Him. I wish we could give half to Him, don't you?"

"I don't know," said Hannah, doubtfully. "I never do give much in church: I always think I can't afford it."

"Peter could afford it."

"Yes, but the Lord the same as gave it all to him."

"Doesn't He the same as give it all to you?"

"I work—I work hard."

"Peter worked. His trade was fishing as much as yours is making butter."

"But," with an uncomfortable laugh, "I don't find money in the churn!"

"O, Miss Hannah, those golden pounds and pounds of butter!"

"But butter is dreadful cheap now. I got only twenty cents for the last."

"Peter didn't have one cent over after he paid the tax bill."

"I wonder how he got his next money," said Miss Hannah, evading the point.

"I do not believe he ever again found money in a fish's mouth. I know one time a beggar asked him for something, and he told him that he had neither silver nor gold."

"I didn't know Peter was so poor as that; I could always give a ten-cent piece."

"When Peter worked afterward, it was not silver and gold he had to give."

Olive was speaking to herself now.

Now that Peter's Lord was taking care of her so richly, had she not herself to give? And might she not? *Must* she not? Could she talk to other women as she was talking to this woman; to poor women and girls in the city who were hungry for other things than bread—as well as hungry for bread? Might she not go up the stairs to them and sit and be sorry for them and talk to them and tell them of Him who was poor for their sakes, that they might be rich, and tell them how to be "rich"?

"The Lord was in Peter's house; He loved to be in a poor man's house—"

"I guess you are like the Lord in this house then," interrupted Hannah, with moved abruptness. "I shall always think when I take the butter up! I'll try and give ten cents every Sunday after this."

Somebody was whistling under the windows.

"That's Hiram!" said Hannah. "He can whistle like music—it's like a church organ sometimes. Mollie whistles with him sometimes; pa says it's too bad for her to whistle, that 'whistling girls and crowing hens always come to some bad ends,' but I do like it."

"I heard a lady whistle once, and it was the sweetest music I ever heard."

"When Hime whistles *that* tune Mollie always comes over. They like to come over here; Diantha scolds Hime and orders him around and says he wastes his evenings because he likes to read with Mollie. Hime is a neighbor's boy, and has been with us years. His father has four other sons and a small farm, so he let Hime come to work for David when he was only twelve; he's twenty-two now and looking around for something bigger to do; Mollie

wants him to do something bigger; he'd do any thing for her."

Hiram whistled that tune for fifteen minutes, walking impatiently up and down under the trees, but Mollie did not "come over," she was in the dining-room listening and laughing with the others as Andrew Croft ate his strawberry shortcake and gave a comical account of his experiences in finding the place.

"Aren't you coming down again to-night?" Hannah asked, rising and rolling up her work.

"I think not; I'll put out the light and sit here at the window."

"You look as though you had heard good news," said the woman, lingering at the door.

"I have," said Olive, wondering if Allan Menzies was as glad with his good news as she was with hers.

With her hand on the door-latch Hannah seemed unwilling to go.

"I hope Mr. Croft—if that's his name—will like his room as well as you do yours."

"I think he will like it, but it will not be as much to him. This room is more than I can tell you to me."

"It's poor—like Peter's house," said Hannah as she vanished.

Sitting in the starlight at her window, Olive heard voices in the lane, and then she heard Andrew Croft's voice saying good-night to Leila.



VII.

THE THING OLIVE WANTED.

"Each human being is a person different from all others.

"Each man is sent into the world to work out by his acts or words some particular truth which he alone possesses; and the inimitable speciality of each man's experience must present things to him in an aspect which can be exactly the same for no other."

—HUGH MACMILLAN.

THE next morning Olive was swinging in her hammock with the happiness of her "good news" in her face. If there were only somebody to tell and—ask! Leila's father would come after a while for a few days; he would commend her and show her just where and how to go to work.

Andrew Croft stepped out of the back door of the old house, and through the grass came around to the hammock.

"This air is a benediction to you," he said, looking

around for something to seat himself on. "You look like a new creature."

"I *am* growing—that's what I came for."

At the foot of one of the trees was a flat stone, it was so near the hammock that he could catch the twisted ropes as it swung toward him; he sat down, and catching the ropes held the hammock still.

"Flat stones grow for me," he remarked, to keep silence from becoming awkward. "This hostess of ours is worth coming half a hundred miles to see—and hear. Some authors think more clearly and rapidly pen in hand; she thinks more clearly and rapidly tongue in hand. I believe she puts her thoughts into audible words when she has no audience beside herself. She's got to think, therefore she's got to talk. It's a mercy there's a rear building for us; I just escaped from her. Who is that Menzies Leila is so thick with?"

Olive pushed her book from her and slipped her glasses off, dangling them from her fingers by the slight gold chain.

"Knowing men, tell me what you think he is."

"I know what he is: I took his measure last night. Who is he?"

"He is Allan Menzies, the eldest brother at

home, there are three younger sisters and two brothers; the mother is not living, the father is a retired something; he is a literary man—I don't know how literary nor exactly what his work is. Fifteen years ago we spent three months under the same roof; there was nothing objectionable about him then; I am scarcely acquainted with him now. He and Leila enjoy each other."

"I should think so! Is it a good thing for her?" he inquired with the solicitude of a near relative.

"Enjoyment is good for all of us."

"That's your old trick of evasion," he exclaimed impatiently.

"You are here, judge for yourself."

"I don't know girls."

"You know men, that's more to the point."

He laughed and gave the hammock a push, then caught it as it swung back and held it fast.

"I did not answer your letter. I intended to come even before I knew Leila was coming. Do not be reserved with me. I deserved it; I was too confident; I thought I knew you. Will you consider it unwritten?" he asked with his easy air of assurance.

"I cannot consider mine unwritten."

"I ask you to consider them both unwritten."

"I cannot; please don't talk about it."

"You shall not be troubled, if you will let me stay."

"I am glad to have you stay for Leila's sake."

"You are happy enough without me."

"I think—I am very happy this morning."

"You have but to express your wish. I never wanted anything as I wanted what I asked for in that letter. I know I blundered."

"No, you did not."

"Will you tell me why you wrote as you did?"

"For the same reason that you wrote as you did—because I wanted to."

"May I ask you one question?"

"You have been so good to me, Andrew!" she said, her voice breaking with a feeling that she could not define. "Ask me twenty, if you like. I am not at all what you think I am. I am very weak and selfish, I am not literary, as you like a woman to be; I am nothing I wish to be."

"You are all I wish you to be, and more lovely than I can appreciate. I am not half good enough to be sitting here talking to you, but I have to be

here, all the same. Do you care for some one else more than you care for me?" The assurance was still in his voice and manner.

The slight gold chain was twisted about her finger; she untwisted it; then she raised her frank, steadfast eyes.

"I do not know that I do. I do not know any one else that I might care for."

"You have never been in society, I know. But I was sure there must be somebody. You know this Menzies and—Leila's father."

His eyes were studying every line of her face.

She smiled and her eyes did not falter.

"Mr. Menzies is engaged and Dr. Provost has been my good friend half my life."

He let the hammock go again, then caught it and held it fast.

"I was just wishing for Dr. Provost; I need him to answer a few questions. I want to ask him about working girls and working women; about women in their homes, women who need other women to help them."

"How much does *he* know?"

"That is what I am desirous of learning."

"I brought a book for you, it will answer your questions; I have been intensely interested in it; it will break your heart."

"I want my heart to be broken. In this soft, sweet air, with the bees humming about me, with that robin flying off with a bit in his mouth and this thicket of greenness overhead, what do I know of the gripe of poverty, misery and sin in some women's lives; I have so much—some woman has nothing of what I have, I want to tell her—"

Tears choked her rapid utterance.

"Olive, what do you want to tell her?"

"It will come when I am with her, it will be given to me. I can live on less and have something to give her. I would like to live among them and show them how to have clean homes, and how to keep themselves like the women we love to be with. I could not sleep last night for thinking of it."

"Your life has always been hard, you have been one of the working women; you have a right to ease and luxury."

"That work will be ease and luxury."

"Not for you. You will give your life for it."

"That is what my life is for."

"It will soon be ended; how long could you bear a strain like that?"

"You will see," she answered, joyfully. "I am not a bit afraid. I suppose I must go to a training school first and then some society will send me."

"Where do you expect to be sent, pray?" he asked, dryly.

"Where I am needed, in some large city. I prefer New York. It is nearer the Provost's. I would like to be near some one I know."

"Why don't you go to London?"

"You may laugh. I am in deadly earnest."

"I know you are."

"May I see that book?"

"Yes, if it will sicken you and frighten you."

"I am not afraid of the truth."

"Wait! Keep still," he said, as she made a movement to slip out of the hammock. "I will get it and read a chapter to you."

"Perhaps Leila will come, and some one else; your reading is too much a treat to have all to myself."

After he left her, she closed her eyes and tried to think; she saw his face through her shut eyes; he

was like his mother's brother, Dr. Provost—tall, dark, handsome, winsome, magnetic; but this man was very selfish, he lived for no one in the world but Andrew Croft, and he did not even know that he was selfish.

The gold chain was twisted and untwisted many times before Andrew returned with the book; she loved this chain, it was Leila's gift, she had given it to the woman she delighted to honor; a gift signified much to this woman, almost everything she had ever owned had been purchased with her own earnings; this chain with the eye-glasses was the one piece of "jewelry" she wore, beside the necessary gold pin to fasten her collar. She had seen a tiny diamond, like a spark of fire, on a girl's finger one day in a street car, and for the first time in her life wished she had something like it.

In her girlhood she had never had the pretty things so many girls delight in; some of them she might have now; she could "save up," and buy that tiny spark of fire; but could she, with the cry of working girls and little children in her ear? Twenty-five dollars would keep some tired mother and baby in the country, how long? If there were room—if Miss Hannah might make room?

Before she had quite finished the furnishing of another empty room in the old house, and nestled the tired mother and child down into its restfulness, Andrew returned with a book in paper cover.

"That old man is poking about in the lane," he remarked; "this world must be very empty to the old."

"Unless there is another world very full," said Olive, who had found some one to talk to, but not altogether to her heart's content.

"This outlook of yours over the meadows and across to the uneven line of purple mountain is very fine, but a landscape to me is never perfect without water," was the reply, after a pause; the other world very full was an unknown country to Andrew Croft.

"Is the ocean perfect to you?"

Olive had had but a glimpse of the ocean.

"Not a perfect landscape," he said, seriously.

"Sometime I want a whole long summer by the sea," she said, with a flash of appreciation of his fun.

"Some summer when you are going about among tenement houses; you had better give up having air-castles."

"That is an air-castle."

"I fervently hope it may stay in the air! What can one woman do? I run away from the cities every once in a while because I can no longer bear the agony of the suffering I cannot avoid seeing."

"It would be more unselfish to stay behind and help!"

"Sympathy wears me out and doesn't pay."

"If I could lie down at night and know that one life was made easier and one heart had learned something of God I could leave all the other suffering to His tender care and go to sleep."

"Why not leave that one life, too? Can you trust Him for all the others and not that?"

"Because He had given me something for it, and what He gives I must needs take. Andrew, would you dare not go if you were sent?" she asked in impressive appeal.

"The heavens will have to be opened and the earth will have to quake before I can believe that I *am* sent."

"Paul couldn't believe that he was until something like that happened to him," said Olive, quickly.

"And he was not sent until it *did* happen," was Andrew's retort, as he took his seat upon the stone.

"I came across a wise article in a wise magazine last week: 'Must Humanity Starve at Last!'"

"What nonsense!" cried Olive. "As if God would let His world starve!"

"You seem to think His world can't get on without you."

"It couldn't! That is why He put me here."

"Shall I begin the book, or select chapters?" he asked, with a laugh at her repartee.

He had found some one to talk to to his heart's content.

"You know the book; do as you think wiser."

"Then I'll read 'Street Trades Among Women.'"

She kept her hammock still and listened with breathless interest; he turned the pages and read another chapter, "Women in General Trades;" then, at the asking of her eyes, he went on and read "French and English Workers."

The reading was interrupted by the sound of the dinner bell in Diantha's back yard; he closed the book reluctantly; slipping out of the hammock, she exclaimed, "I haven't had such a morning since I've been here."

"Then I will begin and go through. The chapters on Paris are especially interesting. But don't let

it set you off on a pilgrimage to all the far countries of the earth."

"I can't. My own language is all I can speak."

Leila had a tired look in her eyes at the dinner table and Andrew suggested that she should take a vacation from that piazza work.

"Oh, no," she answered, brightening, "it grows more and more absorbing."

"I hope Menzies pays you well," said Diantha, in her suspicious voice. "It is making you more crooked than ever."

"It will take a whole gymnasium to straighten me," Leila answered good-naturedly. "I am almost an interrogation point—with the questions left out."

She dropped her eyes demurely with her last shot.

Mollie stood behind her mother's chair, awaiting orders, in a pretty blue calice and ruffled white apron.

Hiram colored angrily as she came to his side to fill his glass with water.

"This is no work for you, Mollie," he said, under his breath, "take my seat."

"No," she whispered, with a gentle pressure on his shoulder, "mamma likes it. It helps her."

"It may be the fashion," he muttered, "but it is no fashion for you."

Menzies did not notice her as she came to his side; he was speaking to Miss Vanema, and saying that she looked only at the bright side of life.

"Then how can she have a fair view of it," replied Diantha, who kept herself alert in replying to every one at the table. "No one sees the whole moon who sees only the bright side of it!"

VIII.

THE THINGS OLIVE DID NOT SAY.

"I have no other but a woman's reason,
I think him so because I think him so."

"The idea of her life shall sweetly creep
Into his study of imagination."

—SHAKESPEARE.

"OLIVE, shall we go on with our book?" inquired Andrew, with his familiar air, as she stepped out into the entry after dinner.

Allan Menzies had not lost his trick of coloring like a girl; he colored with displeasure, and gave the lady addressed a quick glance. Olive saw the displeasure, as she had a way of seeing everything, and in pondering the cause of it, forgot to reply to the eager question. It was more like a demand than a question; perhaps the tone was the thing that vexed Allan. In the secret chamber of her

thoughts he was "Allan" to her as he had been these fifteen years.

"If the others will come," she answered. "Here at 'Pond Lily Farm' we have learned to share our tid-bits."

"I have not promised to read to the others," he said, rudely.

"Haven't you voice enough to go around?" asked Olive, with the merry look in her eyes.

While she was giving this light reply, she was perfectly aware that something in her was touched because Allan Menzies cared how somebody spoke to her.

Had she not loved him long ago, before there was any Virginia Graham? And then she was contrite and ashamed; in the secret chamber of her heart she was not a very strong or brave woman.

"Because I have if you haven't," said Menzies, emboldened by something beneath that merry look, something of the old times he had not forgotten, "and Miss Vanema and the girls are just crazy to go on with *Aurora Leigh*."

"Miss Vanema has outgrown that," returned Andrew. "I know she read it before she was fifteen."

"And that is why I must hear it again," said Olive, "that was so very long ago."

Diantha stopped in her brisk moving around the table, in her after dinner work.

"Don't quarrel about a book," she said, "like two big boys."

"It isn't about a book!" returned Andrew significantly, as Olive passed out. "Miss Mollie, can you leave your household gods under your mother's care and come to the reading?"

"Oh, yes, thank you," cried Mollie delightedly, with the consent of her mother's eyes. "Where is the place? Miss Vanema's hammock?"

"Yes," said Andrew, discontentedly. His thoughts usually came spontaneously to his lips, with little regard for any one besides the thinker; as he crossed the yard with Mollie under his wing, he made a resolution that he kept to himself. In the depth of a heart that did not understand a simple and wise woman, he believed that Olive Vanema could not, in her loneliness and poverty, withstand the temptation of his wealth, to say nothing of the charm he believed to be in his personality—she was only holding off to draw him on; he had, without his usual worldly wisdom, given her

too much assurance of his regard ; had he not that morning told her that in all his life he had never desired a thing so much !—more fool he !—and the resolution he kept to himself was that he would withdraw his forces and concentrate them about this beautiful little creature who was walking gravely at his side, half afraid of him. Before the summer was through Olive Vanema would be glad enough to ask him to write another such letter—and he would not until he had punished her. A poor school-teacher, not young or beautiful, to throw him off with a dash of her pen—and tongue ! If it were not for that look in her eyes that held him fast, he would take this wild rose in earnest, and let her bloom the world into youth again for him ! There was something about this little girl as well as about this green old yard he was walking through that made him care for his youth again—for the look ahead and the things within his grasp.

Andrew Croft was not a bad man ; he was simply not a good man. He was capable of great tenderness—when he thought of it ; he said so many wise things and pretty things, that, in his own estimate of them, they covered a great deal of not do-

ing them. Olive had been "taken" with them; but she had never been taken with him.

Menzies and Leila came by way of the lane; Leila had in her hand her own copy of *Aurora Leigh*. Olive brought down from her chamber her small camp-chair; the two girls sat in the hammock; Menzies threw himself lazily upon the grass, Andrew found his flat stone again. Miss Hannah, in her flapping sunbonnet and limp calico, was working butter in a huge wooden bowl, sitting in a broken-backed chair under a tree near the entrance of the spring-house.

Olive wondered, as she looked at her, how great a change must needs be wrought before she could become like one of them and grow in God's way for her in their world! But where was the need? She was in her own world—where God was also.

"To the Greeks the gods were personal friends," remarked Menzies, bringing his thought somewhere out of the self that Olive used to think she understood.

"Oh, how sad!" she exclaimed.

"Why, I think that was beautiful," said Mollie, who had studied about the Greeks.

"If only in this life—" Olive quoted, "then we

are of all men most miserable. Think what the disappointment would be, little girl."

"Making a god and then never finding any," replied Mollie, who had many thoughts over ironing and sweeping that nobody guessed. "Is that any harder than being disappointed in people?"

Andrew laughed and asked her how she knew enough of life to know that anybody ever *was* disappointed.

"That doesn't take much knowledge, does it, Mollie?" said her cousin. "Old fellow that I am, I am learning what fun it is *not* to be disappointed in people! There are lots of things turning out right in this crooked old world! A long look ahead will settle most questions."

"Mollie was not looking ahead," said Andrew.

With the paper-covered book in her hand that Andrew had tossed carelessly into her lap, Olive was running over the table of contents and missing its meaning, for she was thinking of the man who cared to read this book, with its burden of human life, and toss it aside as he tossed other things aside as all through with; she was scarcely surprised, he was the natural result of being himself. He would

do something the day after to-morrow—when he did everything.

“Olive, will you read?” he asked. “You seem absorbed.”

“Here is something for you, girls,” Olive exclaimed, with sudden interest. “O, Miss Hannah, come here a minute with your butter bowl! I’ll tell you how in this world so full of folks one old woman earns her bread and butter.”

Miss Hannah came with her bowl, she set it on the grass, then went back for her chair; she was always interested in hearing how women out in the world earned their bread and butter.

“I will read about the place where she lived,” said Olive, more interested in this one auditor than in any of the others. “It is in Paris.”

“Paris is the finest city in the world,” said Hannah, eager to show her knowledge. “Our fashions come from there.”

“The buildings are piled together, great masses separated by blind alleys, some fifteen hundred lodgings in all, and the owner of many of them is a prominent philanthropist, whose name heads the list of directors for various charitable institutions, but whose feet, we must believe, can hardly be ac-

quainted with those alleys and stairways, narrow, dark, and foul. The unpaved ways show gaping holes in which the greasy mud lies thick or mingles with the pools of standing water, fed from every house and fermenting with rottenness. The sidewalks, once asphalted, are cracked in long seams and holes, where the same water does its work, and where hideous exhalations poison the air. Within it is still worse; filth trickles down the walls and mingles underfoot, the corridors seeming rather sewers than passages for human beings, while the cellars are simply reservoirs for the same deposits. Above in the narrow rooms huddle the dwellers in those lodgings, whole families in one room, its single window looking on a dark court, where one sees swarms of half-naked children, massed together like so many maggots—their flabby flesh a dirty white, their faces prematurely aged and with a diabolical intelligence in their sharp eyes. The children are always old. The old have reached the extremity of hideous decrepitude. One would say that these veins had never held healthy human blood.’”

“Oh, dear! Deary me!” interrupted Miss Han-

nah, dropping her butter ladle. "Did this old woman live there?"

"She didn't make butter, I'll be bound," said Andrew.

"She did the queerest thing I ever heard of a woman doing," said Olive, speaking to Miss Hannah as she would speak to a child. "When her eyesight was failing and the terror of starvation was upon her, she learned something new to do. She had a sick cousin, a workman in the public garden, who had lost the use of his hand, but he still had his eyes. Some one told him that there were never enough ants' eggs for the Zoological Gardens and for those that feed pheasants. So the eyes of the man and the hands of the woman went to work to raise ants' eggs. The ants have teeth, but they do not gnaw like hunger, the old woman said. At first she was bitten, bitten always. She became as tanned as leather. She was like the skin of a dried apple, and she wore pantaloons and gauntlets of leather. It was almost a coat of mail, but the ants were always underneath. She said she was frantic until she was bitten everywhere, and then she could be poisoned no longer, gnaw as they would. The ants are very lively and love heat, so she

keeps up a great heat and feeds them very high, and they lay many eggs, which she gathers for the bird breeders. Eight and even ten sacks of ants are sent to her from Germany and other places; she earns money enough and to save a little for her girls, whom she has sent away, so that, in her air and her work, they may not lose their pretty, fresh skins, and be bitten besides. And now she has something to eat more than bread."

Miss Hannah had forgotten her butter; without a word, but with a long sigh, she lifted her ladle and began her work in the sweet yellow mass.

"Miss Hannah, English butter-makers think they make better butter than ours," said Leila, who took an absorbing interest in the work she found herself among. "I learned the English rules for butter making to-day."

"Do tell!" cried Hannah. "Perhaps I can rule my butter by them. Miss Vanema says the Lord cares for the bread and butter in the world just as much as for the gold and silver, and that He put *bread* in His Lord's prayer."

Olive had said that to her early that morning, when she went out to the cow-yard to see the milk-

ing; it was very pitiful, this hunger this worker had for the Lord's truth to help in her day's work.

"There were ten," said Leila. "I think He likes to have wise rules govern His bread and butter. Don't let me miss any; I was born to be a butter woman.

"First, rinse all the dairy utensils in cold water.

"Second, scald with hot water and rinse again with cold."

"That's what I do," said Hannah, forgetting her butter again. "As if an Englishman had to tell me that!"

"Third, always use a thermometer," said Leila, laughing.

"That's what Dianth says; but my cheek is my thermometer. I put the cream on my finger and touch my cheek."

"Fourth, cream to be at temperature of fifty-six to fifty-eight degrees in summer, and sixty in winter."

"Yes, that'll do," muttered the American butter-maker, "for England—I want *mine* warmer."

"Fifth, ventilate churn sufficiently," said Leila.

"As if a clean woman had to be told that! I don't live in one of them Paris places!" objected Miss Hannah, with great indignation.

"'Sixth,'" continued Leila, after pausing to think, "'churn at forty to forty-five revolutions per minute.'"

"That's round and round, isn't it? My butter is made with an up and down dasher."

"'Seventh, stop churning immediately the butter comes.'"

"Any fool knows that," was the indignant rejoinder.

In the laugh that greeted her words, Miss Hannah went off with her butter bowl, and did not return for her chair or the remaining three butter rules.

"The spirit of Bunker Hill," commented Andrew, "will not accept English common sense. Leila, why didn't you say they were American rules?"

"That wouldn't have been true," said Mollie.

"Suppose somebody should tell you a lie, Mollie, what then?" he inquired lightly.

"I would never, never, believe him again—if he meant to."

"Didn't your cousin ever tell you a lie?"

"Cousin Menzies! No, he couldn't."

"It would be a wretch who could," said Andrew, seriously. "I suppose many a liar would not lie if he could know the uncomfortable train of results that would follow."

"And many a true, true thing would not be done if the doer could know the sorrow he would bring upon himself," replied Menzies.

"That's why we do not know—perhaps," said Olive, "one of the ways to help us do the true things is to keep the afterward sorrow from us."

"Is that fair?" inquired Andrew.

"When we are not brave—and who is?—and would do the true thing, isn't it fair to be helped rather than hindered? There is no promise that sorrow shall not follow obedience."

She was speaking to the listener on the grass.

"Yes," said Mollie, "and when it comes out all right, how glad you are you did it."

"Are you?" asked Andrew. "I am never glad when I have to suffer. I do not think that is all right."

Olive's thoughts ran on; if she had been alone with somebody—with Leila, or Mollie, or perhaps with Allan Menzies—she might have spoken them.

Isaac had to marry Rebekah, even although he might have thought that day in his blind old age when she deceived him: "I would not have married her had I known what she was and what she would do." Mary the Mother might have shrunk that day from the announcement made by the angel, had she known that she must stand at the foot of that cross. But Paul did not hold himself back when he knew that bonds and imprisonment awaited him in every city; or Peter, brave Peter, when he was told the death he must die.

She was playing carelessly with the cover of the book in her lap; from his position near her, Menzies saw by the intent look that she was not thinking of the man who had spoken. The secret of her eyes was a hidden life that he had not found; would he, if he should search—if he might search? He had the right now, with that letter of release in his pocket; all this last year Virginia Graham had loved some one else, "some one young" she wrote, and she had suffered and had not dared tell him, but now with the hope held out that she might grow stronger, and walk about and sit up, she must tell him, and she hoped he would not hate her for it, for she could not be happy with

any one else. At first, she kept her improvement back to surprise him, and then she dared not tell him, for fear he would come to Germany and claim her promise. Her father knew, he had found it out, and said she must write the truth.

"He never wanted me to marry you, dear Allan; it was all my own doing; I am glad he is pleased this time. Don't be hard on me, for indeed I cannot help it. He is young and full of fun and loves me better than you did. You were so old and serious! It is helping me get well; papa says he would be willing for anything to happen to make me well."

In the night he had arisen to light his lamp and read the words again, and then he had fallen on his knees and thanked God as he had never thanked Him in his life.

Would he dare tell her all his story—this girl who would not ride to Laurel Lane with him, who had not cared then to write to him, and who had not answered the one letter he wrote to her.

(Olive never knew that her father had taken the letter from the postman, and, knowing by the postmark and the handwriting that it was from that fellow that boarded with her in the country, had

opened and read it and torn it in pieces in the street. The letter was simply a regret for not saying good-bye, and saying that he would never forget some of the talks that showed him how good and true a man should be to deserve a woman like her.)

He was free to love her, the very freedom was so sweet that he asked nothing beside it for awhile; and if this happiness were for him—if God should give it—had she lost any thing by what the years had wrought in him? *He* had lost nothing; a sweeter woman never drew breath; the girl Olive Vanema had promised nothing half so rich and sweet as the woman Olive Vanema had become. Where had she been to learn this grace?

As he looked up at her, her eyes met his, she was not thinking of him, he saw; how could she, when, as Diantha said, he was going to Germany?

But, in an instant, her eyes were on her book; she was afraid of herself; she was thinking that she would love to talk to him, and she could, to her heart's full content.

IX.

YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY.

" If hope grew on a bush
And joy grew on a tree,
What a nosegay for the plucking
There would be!
But, oh, in windy autumn,
When frail flowers wither,
What should we do for hope and joy
Fading together?"

—CHRISTINA J. ROSSETTI.

In her little upper chamber that evening Olive sat alone; in her lap was a book, half scrap, half journal, half note, half everything that she had saved from the pile of things collected and destroyed that last week at home after her father died and she was "breaking up housekeeping." Her furniture, her mother's furniture, was stored in a garret chamber in Dr. Provost's large house; some

few books and pictures she cared for she had put in the bottom of her trunk, and this soiled and dingy book was among them. The date on one of the blank pages was fifteen years ago; why, now she remembered she had bought it at the village store; that one store in Dazey had been an art museum to her; coming out of school one afternoon, she wished for a blank book—Allan Menzies had quoted something she wished to copy—and, very uncertain of getting anything to suit her, she had inquired for blank books at the store. How much she found to put in it! Here was a recipe for making mucilage and under it one for orange cake that Miss Tunison gave her; she thought her mother would like that cake; and then a list of names of books Allan had written for her, but, alas, she had never had the money to purchase one of them. Would she care for them now? It was a pleasure to look at the titles and see what he had read and cared to have her read:

“ Science in Story.

“ The Building of a Brain.

“ Borderland of Insanity.

“ The Law of Love, and Love as a Law.

“ Lessons for Children about Themselves.

"The Child, Its Nature and Relations."

What a delight to get them now and read them under the trees ! Should she—might she show him the list in his own handwriting, and ask him if they would be as good for her now ? Would *that* be as good for her now as then ?

On the next page was a poem she had found afterward and copied; it was one night when her father lay in a heavy sleep on the lounge, and her mother, after a fretful evening, had fallen asleep; it was ten years after Allan Menzies had written the titles of the books. With a keen pleasure in the pain of it, she read the words:

" ' Come take the flower—it is not dead,
It stayed all night out in the dew.'

' I will not have it now,' he said,
' I want it—yesterday, I do!'

" ' It is as red, it is as sweet—'
With angry tears he turned away,
Then flung it fiercely at his feet
And said, ' I want it—yesterday!'

" As sullen and as quick of grief,
Sometimes a lovelier flower than this
I crush forever, scent and leaf,
Then scent and leaf forever miss.

"It keeps its blush, it keeps its breath,
It keeps its form unchanged; but I
See in its beauty only death.
Then drop it in the dust—and why?

"And why? Ah! Hand Divine, I know—
Forgive my childish pain, I pray.
To-day your flower is fair, but, oh,
I only want it—yesterday."

It had kept its blush and breath, scent and leaf were there, all the night of these years it had been out in the dew—she loved Allan Menzies then and she loved him now—there was no reason in it, there had been no reason then—it was simply and terribly true. She did not know how she knew it; she did not know at what instant it had come back, or whether it had always stayed—she did not want it only yesterday—she wanted it now.

He was unchanged, or changed into betterment; he would understand her without being told—and then she laid her head upon the table beside the time-worn pages of the book, and, with hands clasped tightly together in her lap, said only: "Father, I can't help it. I will do my best to try. You did not give it to me yesterday, I am willing and glad to do anything else you tell me to—to-day, or to-morrow."

The tears dried in her eyes, there was nothing in her life to be sorry for, but God's will—and she loved that. She could love the hurt of it for the sake of the comfort of it. And then she read: “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

Dead! With a life to live. What in her was dead? Not any love or longing for right and beautiful things; only the dead things were dead, the things that could not live with Christ; the things that died a natural death in His presence; her will when it rebelled against God's will, her love of *things* in themselves and because she desired them to be satisfied with them; no longer did she think that her life could consist in the abundance of the things she used to wish for—like any girl. She did not even think of these coveted things now. All she desired was work to do and strength to do it, that made her happier than all the “things” any body could wish for in all the world. She had the money saved, she could have that tiny diamond, like a spark of fire, on her finger; she could save money for those books; she could teach again and save the income from her uncle's estate to travel with in vacation—once she had been wild to travel

—why, she *could* have very many of those things she used to wish for and pray for! She could have Allan Menzies to talk to every day—no, she could not, that would only be building another “yesterday” for her heart to ache over in another to-morrow. And she did not wish for this, or will it; how could she, when God had given it, or allowed it to be given, to another woman?

If she could have all his time, all his thoughts, all his tenderness and strength by stretching out her hand to him as easily as she could stretch it out now—and she stretched it out and withdrew it quickly—she would not do it unless God would be glad. She could not desire this tenderness and strength unless it were God’s will and desire for her.

And then came the softest and gladdest tears she had ever shed; for she knew now as she had never known before that her life and every desire in it was hidden, with Christ, in God. Nothing but this hiding could keep her so safe.

Had there been any temptation? She felt and understood the flash and thrill with which he had

lifted his eyes to her; she knew what he was thinking; how could she but know what she had seen before—that night he asked her to go with him to Laurel Lane! And she was afraid to go, because of her father.

Was it a temptation? With that girl far away in Germany—who had not her own first right to him—would he not come back to her now? No; it was not a temptation! She would not stretch out her hand to him—she would not talk to him, or let him talk to her or read to her—she *could* not wish for what God had withheld from her and given to some one else. It was not *in* her to wish for it. She did love him again, but it was so sweet and innocent that she was glad the Lord knew about it better than she could tell Him. It was sweeter and less selfish than that other time. Then it was for her own sake, now it was for his, because he was so worth loving. A stout, bald old bachelor, with nothing about face or manner that a girl would find attractive; his kindly manner was almost elderly; that way of stepping back had nothing of self-assertion, it was very humble; she thought he must have been hurt sometime, and so was very kind to others. The story of his fifteen

years might have been harder than her own (and hers did not seem at all hard to-night); whatever it was, she was confident it had been good for him, and would be good for every one whose life touched his all along.

This was worth learning—worth suffering a little to learn. And now she could thank God for every thing and go to sleep. Hope and joy were growing close together, hid with Christ in this life she need take no thought about.

In this abundance, what was an abundance of “things”?

She knelt beside her bed a long time that night.

Would it be wiser to be strong and stay, or to go away? Would it be wiser for his sake? She must not make it hard for him to go to Germany to that poor thing who was walking across her room for the first time in five years. This girl was very rich, with her he could satisfy all those luxurious tastes he used to laugh about, and she would love him into forgetting that he had ever had any younger years. No; she did not want any thing yesterday but what she had had, nor to-morrow but what she would have, where she was, hid with Christ in God. It must be because she was so hidden

that this temptation slipped past her ; He would not let a thought of such evil selfishness touch her with longing ; it could not touch Christ, and it could not touch her, because she was *with* Him.

She was too joyful to sleep.



X.

UNDERNEATH.

"If there was an ant at the door of thy granary asking for help, it would not ruin thee to give him a grain of thy wheat; and thou art nothing but a tiny insect at the door of my All-sufficiency. *I will help thee.*"—SPURGEON.

"What man without a Friend in Heaven
Could bear his burden on the earth?"

—NOVALIS.

THAT evening, in the hour when Olive knelt beside her bed, Allan Menzies was reading in his chamber; he threw himself upon his bed with a book in his hand and read until the lights were out and the house was still. In speaking of it afterward he told it, as was his way, in few words; as he read, his eyes ran over the pages, he did not seem to be absorbing what he read; suddenly he became oppressed as with a burden, the burden of a conviction; he must believe in Christ the Son of God; he

must become a Christian. The conviction could not be reasoned with and put down, it could not be set aside; there it was heavier and heavier; he must believe and repent; he must believe and repent and be forgiven. He did not think, it was being thought for him; he did not feel it, it was being felt for him; it was in himself but not of himself. It came and stayed.

The next morning he gave Leila her work to do on the piazza and told her he should be away until noon; if she preferred to wait until to-morrow morning, he had no objection.

"I will wait," she said promptly, "there would be something I shouldn't understand, and then I couldn't go on. I want to go after blue-flag with Miss Olive, beside."

"Very well," he answered, going down the steps.

He went out into the road and turned toward Monroe. Diantha came through the hall, rubbing flour off her chin with her floury fingers; she was moulding bread in the kitchen, but she had caught the sound of his voice, and something unusual in the tones struck her; there was the same unusualness at breakfast; it could not be that this girl knew the secret of it.

! "Cousin Menzies is in a mood this morning," she remarked, giving her apron-string a firmer knot.

"Is he?" asked Leila, with disrespectful carelessness, piling her papers together.

"He has as many moods as hairs in his head—" and then Diantha laughed at the simile, as the vision of his bald forehead rose before her.

With a laugh, Leila ran down the steps and off to find Miss Olive, to give her "Mrs. Di's latest."

"She needn't have flashed off," muttered Diantha angrily; "she was afraid of what I would say. I will give her a blast she will take heed to sometime; she *knows* he's almost married. And yesterday she asked him if it wouldn't be fun to go off on a day's drive! She needn't think she'll get *my* horses."

The blue-flag grew on one side of the brook, and on the other was a patch of calamus. Leila was not going after calamus to-day; that would make another expedition.

"A walk is nothing unless it is for something," she said to Olive, as she slipped her hand through Olive's arm. "Don't tell me that that is like life, and that I don't know the *for* something in my own

life, yet. What if I don't ? Do I have to before it comes ? There's something in Cousin Menzies' life (wouldn't Mrs. Di be angry if she heard my unwarrantable familiarity ?) that never grew there before. His gray eyes had depths beyond depths at the breakfast table. Miss Olive, I believe I'd like to stay here a year. It's the most interesting spot I ever dropped down into. I've thought so much about myself that I forgot there were other folks ; and these two houses are full of them. I shouldn't wonder if I were one of them myself. Papa wants me to have some salt water, and says I must go for two weeks, at least, and I hate to. It wouldn't be so dreadful if you and Mollie and Cousin Menzies and Andrew would go with me ! *Couldn't* you go ? Don't you need a breath of salt ? You don't need that or anything," the girl rattled on. "I never saw you so blooming in my life. It will take more than salt to make me bloom."

Could she go ? That would be an escape, and he might be gone before she returned.

"Aren't your engaged with Mr. Menzies ? How nearly is your work finished ?"

"Oh, that would be endless, if we both wanted it. He wrote awhile himself yesterday morning.

I guess he's had a shock and it has restored his fingers. Mrs. Di thinks he could do all his writing if he only thought so. She thinks it's a scheme of mine. He wrote a long letter to Germany yesterday. Mrs. Di came out and asked him if he were putting the girl who was doing his writing into it; and he said very seriously that his envelope was about my size, but I objected to being put into it, and she said she didn't know I would object to anything. I wish I *could* fall in love with him, to tease her, but I shouldn't know how to go to work. Should you?"

"Not if I had to go to work," answered Olive, lightly.

The step behind was gaining on them, and while Leila spoke Andrew was at her side.

"I know you want me and were too considerate to invite me; I am aching for some blue-flag."

"Is that all you are aching for?" asked his cousin. "Don't you want to go to the sea with Miss Olive and me?"

"I do, indeed!" he exclaimed. "Nothing would make me so happy. Whose plan is it?"

"Papa's," said Leila discontentedly. "I am

well enough here. I will not go till August, anyway."

"Oh, yes, you will—in July," he returned.

Olive's swift thinking had come to a decision. The very breath of the sea allured her, and the relief of being away anywhere from the gray eyes Leila talked about would be a rest—she was beginning to understand what they had been to her ever since that first morning they had flashed fun at her; and she had a little money saved, enough for a week, perhaps, for nothing less than a grand hotel would satisfy these two people, but—it was a long *but* and meant more than a week to that tired woman and little, pale girl Harriet Peters had written about; this twenty-five dollars would pay their fare and give them board for three weeks. Miss Hannah could make a bed in the open garret, on the floor, if nothing better, and they could eat their oatmeal and drink their buttermilk out under the trees; she would certainly take them for three dollars each, and they could do their own washing—eighteen dollars—and leave seven for the fare and some additions to their wardrobe before they came. How could she, for a week of salt air, take three weeks of the country from this

hard-working mother and the child with a cough and pain in her side. It was their money; it was not her own. It had been given to her for them.

"Olive, you are too serious!" said Andrew. "Your eyes say the seaside is too frivolous."

"You do like the sand and the sea!" persuaded Leila, "and you can afford it, I know. It doesn't cost much to board here, and you are saving money."

"Yes, I do love the sand and the sea—but not now. This rest and change is all I need."

"All you *need*," repeated Andrew. "Is your life, your pleasure, a question of *need*? Don't you believe everything is given us richly to enjoy? You will find those very words in your Bible."

"So much is given me now to enjoy that I cannot enjoy it half, or half enough of it."

"You are thinking about dress," said Leila, determined to fathom her reasons, "but you know I never dress at the seaside. Andrew would love to escort us about as we are this morning."

"You couldn't either of you be more becomingly or fittingly arrayed," he answered. "I shall be only too proud of you both."

Olive had fashioned her simple dress after one

she had seen and admired; it was a flannel of navy blue, trimmed with white braid. Leila's was a gray flannel; she did not look pretty in it; she did not look pretty in anything.

"It is not my dress," said Olive. "I most decidedly prefer to remain here."

"Then it is somebody!" declared Leila. "It must be that you can't leave Mrs. Di."

"If I were Mrs. Di's husband," said Andrew impressively, "there is one nursery song I should certainly quote to her a dozen times a day: 'Hush, my dear.'"

The blue-flag expedition filled all the morning; in the afternoon Miss Hannah and Olive talked over the sleeping arrangements for the mother and little girl, arranged the bill of fare and the price of board, and then Olive wrote to Harriet Peters asking her to send her two "fresh air" candidates the next Monday morning and to keep from them the name of their benefactor. "They would not enjoy it if they knew I was watching them, they would think they must be grateful every fifteen minutes, and that would spoil it all for me as well. You can't think—yes, you can—how glad I am to have this pleasure."

She finished the letter about sundown, and made it an excuse for a walk to the mail. Since Allan came (it was so pleasant to think of his name as no one here seemed to do), he had gone to the mail every day and her walk had been in other directions. Was it only *this* summer that she had walked through the woods with those three letters? It seemed as far back in her history as that school summer at Dazey. Would she love to go back and teach again in that stone school-house? The low, gray building with tall horse-chestnut trees behind it and playground in front, with the grassy bank at the end where she used to open her dinner pail and spread out her lunch with the girls—she had but to shut her eyes to see it. And Miss Tunison's red house, with its gable end to the road and tiny kitchen and narrow back stairs, at the foot of which that welcoming breakfast bell used to sound—and the breakfasts and suppers with three—a rush of longing came over her to see the house again and the dear old woman who had petted her as her mother had never thought of doing. She must be over ninety now; would she know her again?

A step was among the trees somewhere; she had never met any one in these woods; there was a

gang of Italian laborers at the station ; one of them had spoken rudely to Leila ; the step was coming near, quick, decided, she could not flee backward, could she step behind a tree ?

A gray hat, a gray suit—she laughed aloud in nervous relief, and told Allan Menzies that she had been as frightened as a girl.

“ You were going to the mail. I have the letters. Oh, you have something to mail. Shall I take it for you, or will you turn back with me, or wait for me ? You should give me some reward.”

“ I will go to the mail, do not go with me if you have anything else to do.”

“ I haven’t anything else,” he said, smiling. “ I just came in the train.”

“ Mrs. Di expected you at noon.”

“ I was delayed.”

They went on together ; it was but a little way, and in a few minutes they were again in the woods, walking slowly and talking of Dazey. He had a letter in his pocket from Miss Tunison ; it had been dictated to a young girl who was her nurse and housekeeper ; the old lady was ailing this summer and wished to see him and talk over things.

“ I saw her in the winter, I was there a week ;

she has always had a peculiar affection for me ; she named me Allan King, for a friend of hers who died before I was born. They were to be married, and he died the very month. That little red house and thirty acres belonged to him, and he gave it to her. She would never have anything changed about the house ; its red coat was renewed every five years, and when she had new window sashes put in, she insisted upon small panes ; she is a loyal old body."

"Is she very ill ?"

She has been at the point of death twice and then in a few months about again ; she has picked beans this summer, and I've no doubt would be glad to bend her back picking wild strawberries for you."

"How I would love to see her again !" cried Olive, involuntarily.

"Why should you not ?" he asked in eager haste. "She often asked me what had become of you."

"I did not write after the first few times—I was ungrateful not to ; I did not forget her."

"Why didn't you write then ?"

If he knew the reason !

"I was busy; I used to be anxious and worried in those days; I had not learned to take life as it was given to me."

"Did you ever do anything with that little grammar?"

That little grammar! She had forgotten it.

"I was proud of that grammar," he said.

"It was your suggestion."

"Was it? It was your work. Do you remember you came home one night and said one of the youngsters said her mother said she *must* study grammar, and you had no book to teach her and did not know how."

"Yes, and you told me to make a grammar for her—to write my lessons and have a primary class in grammar. How I enjoyed it! It was the event of the day. The older girls always listened. I did write a grammar and had children to try it on."

She did not care to tell him the rest of it.

"And you didn't do anything with it? That was a pity. Why did you not?"

"I did," she said. "I did as you advised. I sent it to a publisher, and he replied that he would publish it if I would promise to follow it within a year with a junior."

"And you *didn't*?"

"I couldn't. I was busy night and day."

Her eyes filled for an instant.

"You should have taken time; it was worth your time. Such an offer as that—and a girl like you!"

"That was three years afterward—after I had tried it on another class and improved it. I did want to do it! It is silly to tell you, but I cried hours and hours one night; I could not give it up; I might have taken nights, but I had to be in night-school then; my father said it would not bring in enough money; we had to have *money*, you know: he could not find a situation, and poor mother was so ill; she was like—she did not take a step for years before she died."

He stifled his expression of impatience and asked instead how long since her mother died.

"They died the same year; it is not three years; father died first, he was never strong."

"And you always were strong, I suppose."

"Oh, yes; until after they died; I had a long illness—now I am having a long rest."

"Are you thinking of teaching again?"

"I am thinking of a dozen things; I might write my grammars," she said, with a happy laugh, "but

I am so out of practice and that publisher may have had a better one since. I would like to teach in Dazey again. I would like, more than like, to go among the poor women of New York and talk to them and read the Bible to them. I know a lady who has been in the work ten years; she is enthusiastic over it; she went first to a training school; some society supported her with a dollar a day."

"And she lived on that!"

"She certainly did, and paid her car fare when the distances were too long for her; the visits she made in a day were incredible, unless you knew her—I couldn't do it. I have three hundred a year from my uncle; he began to help us when father died—he and father, poor father, never could agree—and I could live on that, and some other woman could have the other dollar a day; and there would be another worker in the field."

"Some woman can do that that cannot write your grammars, or teach in Dazey, or go and live with my aunt and comfort her old age—"

"She has not asked me."

"Give her the opportunity."

"And there is Harriet Peters," she exclaimed. She had almost forgotten Harriet Peters.

Before she knew it, she was talking to her heart's content, and had told him all about the plan of the house-mother.

"Anything else?" he asked, in laughing discontent.

"These calls in different directions are perplexing enough; please don't suggest another."

"I would like to," he returned, in a suggestive tone that suggested nothing to her.

"Don't. I must have one of these. I think I shall go to New York. I am growing stronger every day."

He drew a paper from his breast pocket and unfolded it.

"I bought it on the train. I thought the girls might find something in it, and I lighted upon something for you. Stand still, please, and I will read a paragraph."

She stood still and he leaned against a tree; he did not notice it, but it was the very spot where he had stood and read Virginia Graham's letter.

"It is in an article on *Distinguished Women*. In speaking of the work done by women in the last two decades, it states that before this time there seemed to be nothing in particular for middle-aged

women. 'A woman's life seemed extinguished at twenty-five.' That is the unmarried woman probably; wives and mothers certainly have a career. 'But in these days a woman must be middle-aged before she can really begin to accomplish anything.' (Grammars, for instance.) 'This is true as it never was before. Our leading women, philosophers, artists, professional and society women are middle-aged, while girls are kept comparatively in the background until they are twenty-five or thirty.'"

"That will be encouraging to Leila," she replied, as he re-folded the paper.

"Then I will give it to her. She is bright enough to belong to *Sorosis*."

"She wishes she could. She will tunnel under somewhere and come out into a sphere."

When they appeared at the gate Mollie was in the lane ringing the new, large, supper bell; Diantha said if she had to call her table from every point of the compass, she must have a noise loud enough to make them hear.

They were all at the table when Menzies presented himself: Diantha greeted him with a shower of remonstrances.

"Now, Menzies, when I had chicken-pie for you and you promised to be back for dinner! You never broke your word before! Where have you been all day, pray? Did Miss Vanema have to go in search of you? Was she in the secret? It is a wonder that Miss Leila was not on the rampage, too."

"She would have been, had she known that I had something for her," he answered, going around the table and stopping at the back of Leila's chair.

"Miss Lelia, you may care for this paper. I never saw a copy before; there appears to be something in it."

"Thank you," said Leila, demurely, the twinkle in her eyes kept on her plate.

"Oh, may I see?" cried Mollie, bending over Leila.

"No," replied her mother, severely, "it is for Miss Leila. David, we are ready for the blessing."

Leila's tinkling laugh could not be suppressed.

"Oh, Mrs. Di," she cried apologetically, "I *was* struck with the fact that you were ready for the blessing."

"It wouldn't be bad for you if you were," said

Diantha, but the tone was not in the least ill-humored.

"Menzies, who have you seen to-day?" Diantha inquired before the "Amen" had quite left her husband's lips. Her husband's voice in prayer was the only interruption in her stream of words for which Diantha had any respect.

"All sorts and conditions of men; I have been in two great cities."

"Then you have been home?"

"I saw my father for a few moments; the girls were away for the day."

"No one else?"

"I spent two good hours with Dr. Wayne."

"Oh, your minister! I didn't know you ever spent good hours with him."

"That is not the only fact in my life with which you are unacquainted, my good cousin."

"Then you had business with him?" she pressed.

"He may have had business with me," he answered dryly.

"Did he write to you?"

"No."

"Wasn't it sudden—your going?"

"I did not think of it till last night."

"I never saw such folks; I never know what any of you will do next; the chicken-pie is all gone and I never made a better. The crust was exactly right and the gravy delicious. Wasn't it, Lucy Ann? I hope Miss Leila will not keep your goings and doings so close next time! I would have had the chickens to-morrow if she had told me you were going to New York."

"That was cruel in you, Miss Leila," rebuked Menzies.

"Girls *are* cruel—some girls!" Diantha went on in an out-of-breath tone. "I knew a girl once that was. She was engaged to the *finest* young fellow, and he went away to be gone some months, and he asked his father to be kind to her and fatherly and attentive while he was gone—she had no brother to escort her anywhere—and sure enough he *was* kind to her, and, flighty thing, she wheedled him into being engaged to her before poor Tom got back! And that winter they were married, and Tom had to bear it as best he could!"

"What a shame!" exclaimed Leila. "Mrs. Di, that isn't true!"

"As true as I sit here," said Diantha, in solemn asseveration.

"Then I *hate* true stories."

"Don't be a true story yourself then."

"I'm afraid I don't know how to be fiction; and I don't know any old man who has a son in love with me."

Mollie laughed and dropped a tiny hot biscuit from the piled-up plate she was passing to Andrew Croft.

"You can adapt my story then," said Diantha, in high displeasure; "there are none so blind as them that won't see."

"I should greatly prefer the son—anyway," said Leila, composedly, taking a couple of biscuits from Mollie's plate. "I don't like gray heads, and bald ones are worse."

"Some folks do," said Diantha, spilling the tea she was pouring. "Miss Graham is young and rich and beautiful, isn't she, Menzies?"

"She certainly was—at last accounts," he replied, unmoved. "Miss Leila, you suggested a drive."

"Oh, that is all planned! Andrew ordered the horses from Monroe this afternoon, and we are all going. Mrs. Di, you can spare Mollie, can't you?"

"We must have Mollie," said Andrew. "I will take her under my fatherly supervision."

"And Miss Hannah is going," continued Leila, delightedly, "and we will take lunch, if you will be so kind, Mrs. Di; let me see—Mr. Menzies and I, and Andrew and Miss Hannah—"

"Andrew and Miss Mollie," corrected Andrew.

"And Miss Hannah and Miss Olive, then," amended Leila, "six of us, won't it be a picnic?"

"Leila! that's slang," said Menzies.

"I was very literal," replied Leila. "I shall be content with nothing less than thirty miles."

"And thirty lunches," laughed Diantha. "Do you think I can get up a lunch in half an hour?"

"I know your resources; I am not afraid of lunches; we must start early. For what time did you order the horses, Andrew?"

"Half-past eight."

"What on earth is Hannah going for?" asked Hannah's sister.

"Miss Olive asked her," answered Leila, with cheerful promptness. "She and Andrew and I each have the privilege of asking somebody."

"Why Hannah?" asked Diantha. "Why not Mary Jane, or Sarah Lib, or Maria, or Lucy Ann?"

"And why Mary Jane?" inquired Leila, with the utmost seriousness. "And why picnic?"

"This is frivolous," reproved Diantha. "I had something very important on my mind, and I almost forgot it. This afternoon I promised Eliza Simmons that I would lay a certain matter before my supper table, and send her the result to-morrow morning. She is a most reliable woman, I've known her for years—"

"How many?" interrupted Leila.

"Long enough to know that she is to be trusted, and with some folks that takes time, Miss Leila! There was a fire two months ago in Monroe and Widow Erskine's house was burnt down—it was insured, but the insurance had run out and her thriftless son put off having it attended to, and now her little all is burnt to the ground, and she is dressmaking with her two younger children in three rooms; this son is a shame to his mother, and she is supporting herself and the others by making dresses; she is a first-class dressmaker; she made Mollie a navy blue cloth last winter that fits like a glove; and when the minister's daughter was married she made all her dresses—and so Mrs. Simmons is around with a subscription paper to

help her put up her house again; her husband was an elder in the church, and the church people have all put down their names; one elder—he's rich, though, and hasn't got a child in the world—put down his name for one hundred dollars; she's got seven hundred, and a thousand will do it. She's got a nice garden and a yard in front, with a small rockery with nasturtiums blooming in it, and she will always keep it pretty; so you needn't be ashamed of your money going in such a woman's keeping. Ellen's father—Ellen Erskine's father—used to work for pa; they are a deserving family all the way through. I told her I would give a new five-dollar bill—and here it is! Mollie, get a china plate, child, and pass it around."

"Yes, Mollie," encouraged Andrew, "we'll stay home to-morrow and put the money in the plate. The horse-hire would drive a nail in that thousand dollar house."

"But I don't want you to stay home," said Ellen Erskine's friend. "Can't you squeeze out a little something without that?"

"Yes," said Andrew, leaning back in his chair and putting his hand into his pocket, with the motion of squeezing it; "bring that china plate, Mollie."

"I knew you would all do something!" exclaimed Diantha, gratified. "No, David, you needn't put your hand in your pocket; this five dollars is for both of us and Mollie and Lucy Ann."

"For me?" asked Hiram, who rarely spoke at the table, depositing his silver dollar on Mr. Croft's twenty-dollar bill.

Leila said her pocket-book was up-stairs but she would not forget; Menzies gave a bill a twist and tossed it to Mollie; Olive colored and spoke with embarrassment: "I am very sorry I have nothing to give; I would love to—if I had it."

"The widow's mite," suggested Diantha, with virtuous severity.

"That was all her living," said Olive, "and I cannot give even that."

"Mine is half for you!" suggested Leila, in a tone that would have brought a laugh had anybody dared. "I will give ten."

David's hand had wandered toward his vest pocket, but a look from his wife brought it hastily back to his bread and butter.

"I've got some news," announced Lucy Ann, the plump widowed sister. "Hannah is going to have

two boarders. She told me just before supper when she ran over to borrow the baking soda!"

"What does she want boarders for?" snapped Diantha. "Where will she put them to sleep?"

"They are the kind that can sleep in the garret, she's got an old bedstead, and they will spend all their time out of doors; the woman is a washer-woman; she lost her consumptive husband in March, and the little girl is sick, like him."

"What does she want such folks for?" grumbled Diantha. "I wouldn't let her do it, if I knew! Is it too late to stop them now?"

"I think it is," replied Olive, the flush in her forehead contradicting the gentleness of her tone. "They are Christian people, Americans—and, when the father was in average health, were very comfortable; she is a member of the church my friend Miss Peters attends, and, with watching for months with her husband and washing beside to support the little family, is quite worn out. They ask very little attention; fruit, eggs, buttermilk and oatmeal, with a place to sleep and all outdoors to breathe will be luxury itself."

"How can they pay their board, then?" asked Diantha. "Will my folks be sure of that?"

"A friend of Miss Peters is interested in them; Miss Hannah will lose nothing."

"Oh, *she* isn't afraid; she's glad," interposed Lucy Ann, "and the little girl's sickness isn't catching."

"Well, I wish she had spoken to me," insisted Diantha. "I didn't know that my boarders would care to be associated with a washerwoman."

"Perhaps she will wash for you, Dianth," said Lucy Ann. "That will keep her from prowling about."

"No," answered Olive, "she is coming for perfect rest. She is too much of a lady to intrude. You will not be in any way troubled."

"It is something to have a lady for a washerwoman," said Diantha tartly. "I wonder how much this friend is willing to pay."

"Three dollars," replied Lucy Ann, who was pent up at meal-times and glad to have a vent. "Hannah thought that was enough."

"For *both*?" asked Diantha, in a voice rising to a scream.

"Why, no! Land's sake! Six for the two."

"We might build her a house, too," suggested Leila innocently. "Mollie, where's your china plate?"

Hiram arose and set his chair back against the wall; he whistled as he passed through the kitchen.

"What a handsome fellow that man of yours is!" said Andrew to David. "It's a shame for him to work all day like an ox."

"He doesn't," Mollie said, quickly. "He works like a man with brains! He has done every example in the arithmetic; next winter we are going through the algebra."

"A kitten going through the algebra!" cried Andrew, catching at the red ribbons that floated at Mollie's side. "Are you his teacher?"

"No; he is mine," said Mollie, with a touch of pride that would have given the "hired man" strength for a week's plowing.

As Olive stepped out into the twilight Menzies emerged from somewhere and came to her side.

"It is a perfect night for a stroll," he said, in a voice that evidently needed to be controlled. "Will you go up the road with me?"

"No," she answered, with a quick, troubled flush, "I—I have some letters to write."

"Will not to-morrow do?" he insisted.

"No."

Her lamp was not lighted early that night; she began a letter, and then crumpled the sheet in her hand; the laughing voices in the lane came up to her, Hiram was with the others; after awhile she saw Menzies turn back and enter the house, the four that were left strolled down toward the brook. They were singing hymns when they returned an hour later in the starlight. Miss Hannah came up to Olive's room to talk about her boarders that were coming and to say again and again that she was so glad one tired woman and one sick little girl could have a good time.

"Miss Vanema, I thought of something while I was milking to-night," she said in her tone that was a mixture of simplicity and shrewdness. "If you and me can't go out into the big, dreadful world where folks has such hard times, we can be real kind to these two! And perhaps that's just as well."

"It is better for them to bring them here; I believe I would rather do that, if I could. I hope you will have some poor people every summer, Miss Hannah."

"If folks will pay their board," she said, with

a laugh, "I certainly will, Dianth or no Dianth ! You would like to have a house in the country and give green grass and fresh air to folks, now, wouldn't you ?"

"Yes, I would ; I would put them all out to pasture."

"And talk to them about things in the Bible—"

Olive was thinking. This was another thing to do. But she had no pasture.

This giving was only three weeks ; she would not be satisfied unless she had the pasture to give all the season through. The summer would be over before she could save another twenty-five dollars.

"That story about Peter and the fishing was good ; I can't seem to find them out like that. Do you suppose there's another one ?"

"Shall I look ?" asked Olive. "The Bible is a storehouse."

"I *wish* you would ! I've brought my work again, as you told me to !"

XI.

ANOTHER ONE.

“——But hearing oftentimes,
The still, sad music of humanity.”

“But hushed be every thought that springs
From out the bitterness of things.”

—WORDSWORTH.

“SOMETHING seems to have gone out of me this summer,” Hannah began again in her pathetic voice. “I don’t mean to be unthankful—the Lord knows I am thankful for my home ever since you read about that dreadful hole in Paris and the old woman all tanned up and the ants biting her—but my soul gets as empty sometimes as my body does when I’m hungry for my dinner. I can take a bite and comfort myself before dinner-time, but when something else inside of me is empty and it’s dinner-time don’t come, I don’t know what to do. Sometimes I cry!” she said in a tone of childish

confidence. "But no one knows, it's either in the cow-yard or the spring-house. There's nobody living *with* me, somehow."

How well Olive understood !

"I know about that. I have cried that kind of tears," she comforted, lighting her lamp. "I wasn't happy until I found that I might live with One who loved me."

"But you ain't married !"

"No. I do not ever expect to be, any more than you do. It is something like the happiest marriage, but a great deal happier. Even in the happiest marriage there must be some disappointing days, but there is no disappointment in this ; it grows happier all the time."

"There ! I knew you had something to make you happy. I told them so. And I said you wasn't rich either, and had had to work as hard as the rest of us and go without things. You show it."

Those were the sweetest words, Olive thought, that human lips had ever spoken of her—"You show it"—the sweetest ever spoken to her by human lips.

If she showed it, how true it must be !

"You want some one to live your life *with* you ;

to walk by your side every hour ; to help you in your work and show you the best way to do it ; to show you how to grow into a sweet, lovely, wise woman."

"Nobody could show me how to be that. It isn't in me."

"Yes, it is. The beginning is. And if you are every hour with Him I mean, you can't help growing sweet and lovely and wise. We grow *like* people we are with. You five sisters puzzle me and amuse me and surprise me, you are so alike. What I see in you one day, I am sure to see in one of the others before the next day is over. Even in Mollie I catch a little bit of you ; a sweet little bit, let me tell you. You *grow* alike. If you see any sweet thing in me it is because I am growing like the One I am with. Every day I think thoughts I never speak ; they are hidden from you even, who see me so many times a day ; I do not put all of them even in my prayers—my life is so hidden."

"That's what Dianth says, nobody knows you."

"Your life is just as hidden, nobody knows you ; nobody sees you cry, nobody hears your prayers ; your life is hidden with Him who sees you cry, who hears your prayers, and who *feels* how empty your

heart is, and how your inside self is hungry to be fed. You are hidden *with Christ*, if you love Him and obey Him."

"I try to."

The pale, large eyes were overflowing; tears were dropping, but she did not notice them.

"Then how can you be alone? When Peter was telling Jesus about the tax, He was with him, as near as you are to me; He saw his face and his hands, and heard every word he said. When Jesus was in Peter's house they were hidden together. A man standing on the outside could not know who was in the house unless Peter looked out or Christ looked out; then he would see them both and know they were hidden together. When Peter went out about the Lord's work, and was so brave and strong and faithful, teaching God's will and healing the sick, people knew he had been with Jesus and said so. They saw that he had the spirit of Christ. Our life—your life, as well as mine—is hid with Christ where Christ is. You know where Christ is. He is in God. So we are in God, with Christ. We are not alone in God, just by ourselves; we couldn't be—we couldn't be in God at all unless we were with Christ."

"I am afraid I'm not with Him much ; not as much as you are. I'd like to be all the time. I'd like to be as near as Peter was and tell Him things and grow like Him, as Peter did. Do you think I ever will ? "

"Dear Miss Hannah," Olive's own eyes were full, "I know you will. You have begun. Christ never lets any body go."

"But I'm so contrary, and things are so contrary. I used to think before you came that everybody had things but me. I thought no one ever lived who was left behind as I am. The girls have always picked at me and made me do their way. They always stepped into things somehow and got them, and I was left out. I suppose somebody has to be left out; but I don't like to be that somebody. I want my turn and I ain't ever had it. But if all that's true, I don't much care ; I shan't be so lonesome now."

"Now I have found the very thing for you ! The very thing that has comforted me. I felt left out once about something ; I wanted it very much, but I couldn't have it."

"Did somebody else get it ? "

"Yes ; somebody else has it to-night."

"Don't you want it now."

"Oh, no, not for a minute. I can't, because God doesn't want me to. He gave it to somebody else. Everything is His, in the first place ; everything you want He holds in His full hand ; He doesn't give things to some one else because He loves them better, but He keeps things from you because He loves you and has something better. Now I will tell you a story. There was once a man who wanted something ; thirty-eight years he had had an infirmity—you haven't wanted anything as long as that yet, have you ? "

"No ; I've only felt so since I began to grow up. I was as happy as the girls were when I was a little thing."

"This man must have grown up with his infirmity ; he knew of only one way to get rid of it ; there was a pool of water near where he lived, and people told him that sometimes an angel came down into the water and touched it and gave it healing properties, so that the *first* one who stepped in after the angel had touched it was made well, no matter what the disease was : and everybody believed it so sincerely that porches were built about the banks, and they were filled with sick people,

blind, lame, palsied, all kinds of sickness—and every one of them hoped some day to be first. This man had hoped it a long time, and one day he was lying there—I suppose some one had brought him and left him to do the rest of it as well as he could—and Jesus came by that way. He knew he was there, and how long he had waited. He asked the sick man if he wanted to be made well, and he answered that he had no man to help him down into the water, that some one else always stepped down first and got it. Suppose the day before he had stepped down first and been healed, he would not have been there this day; when Jesus came that way he would have missed seeing Him.”

“But he would have been well, and that was what he wanted,” was the quick answer.

“But it was not what Jesus wanted. He wanted him to wait till He came; until He came to speak to him and give him that very thing. Would you rather step down first or wait till Jesus comes?”

“If all the man cared for was to get well, I suppose he would rather have been well years before,” reasoned Hannah.

“He was sick before Jesus was born—he had to wait till Jesus grew up and came to find

him. But before He came down to the earth He knew this man was on the earth, a sufferer, and He did not hurry one step. Every day He permitted some one else to step down into the pool. But He did not once forget this man; he knew he was coming to heal him. Suppose you were lying there sick, would you rather step down or have Jesus come to you ? ”

“ Oh,” cried Miss Hannah, clasping her hands, “ I would rather wait all my life to have Him come. I would rather see Him than step down and get all the kingdoms in the world.”

“ Then you do not want to be first in your own way ? ”

“ No ; I don’t want to do my own stepping down. I never was one to scramble and push for myself. Dianth says I have no knack at doing for myself ; somehow there’s so much to be done for other folks,” she complained in her tired voice.

“ Then do cheerily for other folks and wait till Jesus comes by. You may be sure He will stop and ask what you are waiting for. This man got what he wanted ; his healing. He had been waiting for an angel’s touch, and now he had the presence and voice of the Lord. What he wanted wasn’t half so

good as what the Lord came to bring him. If you had had what the others have, you might not have been so hungry to be with the Lord. You might have cared for the things more than for him."

"I'm afraid I would," she said thoroughly convinced.

"Now, after you see Him and live with Him you will be so happy you will not care. All you will care for is to keep close to Him and know what He wants you to do and to do it. And then everything He gives you, and He will give you a great many things,—will be sweeter than any thing He ever gave you before. I never was so happy as I am now. Every time He gives me work for Him it makes me joyful enough to sing."

"And you do all alone here by yourself; I hear you."

"Some of my work is this lovely talk with you and helping you find things about Him."

"I hope some of *your* work will be to cheer that tired, hard-working woman and make her stay here something to be remembered all her life."

"I'll try," promised Hannah, in a grateful voice.

To Olive's surprise, the undemonstrative woman arose and kissed her, then hurried away as if she were ashamed of herself.

XII.

WHEN IT RAINED.

"So oft the doing of God's will
Our foolish wills undoeth!
And yet what idle dream breaks ill
Which morning light subdueth?
And who would murmur and misdoubt
When God's great sunrise finds him out?"

—MRS. BROWNING.

"FOR the rain, it raineth every day," quoted Andrew at the breakfast table the next morning.

"I knew it would rain last night," said Diantha, bustling in with the coffee-pot, "there was every sign of it. Yesterday was too beautiful to last."

"Well, we can bear it, if every body else can," said Andrew comfortably. "I told that man not to come with the horses if it rained. Little Miss Mollie here looks very sunshiny about it."

Mollie laughed and Hiram's strong lips twitched;

he did not lift his eyes ; last night Mollie had said to him : " It's too provoking, Hi, for us to go and have fun and for you to be plowing corn all day ; I hope it will rain."

" My mind is relieved of that lunch, Miss Leila. I can't fill orders in a second, and I wanted you to have enough and of the best. Now you may stay indoors and eat me out of house and home."

" Mrs. Di ! " cried Leila, in comical despair, " quoting Shakespeare ! That is the latest ! You told me yesterday you had never read a line of Shakespeare in your life and never would."

" Which is the Shakespeare ? " asked Diantha, innocently.

" That is what I would like to know," said Menzies.

" ' He hath eaten me out of house and home,' " quoted Leila, triumphantly. " Don't any of you know your Shakespeare better than that ? "

" We know better Shakespeare than that," returned Menzies.

" What a day it will be to read aloud ! " cried Leila.

" And to talk," exclaimed Andrew, who loved talking more than reading.

"And to write," added Menzies, with a laughing look at his amanuensis.

"No, sir; I will not write one word for you to-day. I am disappointed, and everybody has got to make the day pleasant for me."

The day began its pleasantness with its first after-breakfast hour up-stairs in Leila's chamber; under her waterproof and umbrella Olive had brought her small work-basket and a roll of gingham to make into two long aprons for Miss Hannah; she said she would rather have "them two aprons cut and made than ride to Halifax." Mollie came up-stairs with her painting materials, her mother had giving her the day for a "picnic at home;" Leila found several articles in her dainty wardrobe that needed timely stitches, and altogether the three congratulated themselves upon having the best time in the world alone together.

The door into the hall was left open; in the hall under the window a small lounge that would fit in nowhere else had been placed this summer and Menzies had discovered it and taken his books there. As she came up, Olive stopped at the window to look over the fields in the rain, and then her fingers having an instinct for books, she took

up one of the books scattered over the lounge and opened it. It was one of the books upon that list he had written for her; she dropped it, feeling that she had no right to meddle with anything that belonged to that time; the next one she took up, *Socialism and Christianity*, was too tempting to leave; she kept it in her hand while the girls talked; the roll of brown and white gingham was in her lap.

"Mr. Menzies," called Leila, hearing his step in the lower hall, "come up, please. Miss Olive has one of your books and can't put it down to do her sewing. Come and take it away or read it to us, please. I can't have her charity hindered in this way."

"You saucy girl!" rebuked Olive.

Nevertheless, the book was taken from her and a chapter read aloud while the sewing and painting went intermittingly on; he asked Leila to look through the book and choose the chapter she preferred; she chose "The Rights of Labor."

Mollie painted contentedly, losing a whole paragraph now and then, not caring to listen to much of it; at last something arrested her and she listened:

“‘Agriculture is not the royal path to wealth and leisure. If the farmer is the most independent of men, he is also the hardest driven by his work. He must grunt and plow and hoe until every joint in his body is stiff; he must fight the weeds in the ground, and weevil, cankerworm, and potato-bug above ground, the frost that kills his apple blossoms, the crows that dig up the newly planted corn, the hail that cuts his ripening grain. Horace Greeley has been quoted as saying that every turnip in his garden cost him a dollar.

“‘Nature is the hardest of masters; you must wring out of her hands all she gives you.’”

Then the painting went on again and Mollie thought and did not listen; Hiram had told all this to her many a time; now she had found it in a book; a book that was written by Leila's minister; and Leila had heard the lectures before they were put into a book.

It was a long chapter; the others seemed to care for every word of it; she finished the blackberry blossom and put in the leaves before Menzies threw the book down. Hiram asked her to paint the blossom for him: she was afraid her mother would not be pleased if she knew she were taking all this time

for him. She had told her to paint something Mr. Croft would like ; but how did she know—and what did she care what Mr. Croft would like ?

“Cousin Menzies, may Hiram have that book ? He reads the deepest books ! He studies like a school-teacher.”

“Why doesn’t he become one ?” inquired Olive, thinking of the school-house at Dazey, “and then he could have so much more time for study and fit himself for what he likes best.”

“I don’t believe he ever thought of that,” said Mollie. “I never did. It is a good idea, Menzies ?”

“Excellent,” returned Menzies. “I taught the winter school at Dazey three winters. I’ll talk to the youth about it. It’s time for him to be looking about ; he is as old as you are, Mollie, isn’t he ?”

“Is it time for me to be looking about ?” asked Mollie, demurely.

“Somebody will soon be looking about for you,” he answered.

It was on the tip of Leila’s saucy tongue to remark, “Her mother is now,” but she refrained. She wished, sometimes, people would give her credit for refraining.

"What is Hiram doing for himself now?" asked Leila.

"Studying, thinking, waiting—hoping," said Mollie, and then she added, painting the tip of her finger green, "he is praying. He is very good."

"Then he'll get it," declared Leila, positively. "I have great faith in other people's prayers; mine never amount to much."

"O, Leila! that's wicked," exclaimed Mollie.

"The truth isn't wicked. Miss Olive knows mine never do."

"Leila reminds me of myself so often," said Olive, as she smoothed the hem she was turning. "When I prayed in the intensity and anxiety of unbelief, I felt that praying was the hardest way of earning what I desired."

Leila nodded; she knew she had not faith.

"But, Miss Vanema, *can* we have all the faith we want?" asked Mollie. "That puzzles me so!"

"How much do you want?" asked Olive.

"Oh, so much! Ever so much!"

"Who owns all the faith?"

"Why—God does," was the astonished answer.

"Who makes it all and gives it all?"

"I know He does."

"But you don't know how to get it?"

"No, I don't. Not all I want."

"Have you any?"

"I'm afraid not," said Mollie.

"Then I would tell Him I hadn't any, and ask Him to give me some."

"I want more than some."

"Then I would ask for more than some; I'd ask for all I wanted; I'd ask for *all He had*."

"Is He willing to give so much?"

"O, Mollie, Mollie—what *isn't* He willing to give? Can He give anything dearer than what He has given?"

Mollie looked troubled and did not know how to reply.

"I do not think He loves to give what we will hoard, what we do not care for—when He gives faith He gives it for us to *use*."

"Oh, now I see," said Mollie, brightening.

"Perhaps He thinks I do not use the very little bit I have."

"He *knows* I do not," said Leila, positively.

"The tests come with the faith; there is something to do, something to have, something to believe with every particle of faith He gives us. Faith

grows with exercise. God gives it something to grow on."

Olive was at home with girls; she was at home with the things of God. She could forget herself; she had no self. There was something in the look and attitude of Allan Menzies that kept her from being shy of talking to these girls in his presence; she saw that he cared for what she said; that he cared and believed.

"You remember the man born blind; Jesus passed by and saw him. He always sees when He seems to be passing by. He anointed his eyes with clay and told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. The blind man started—he had faith enough to start; he did not murmur by the way about what was the use of washing the clay off after the Lord had put it on; and what good could the water of Siloam do? That had never healed anybody's blindness. Jesus had touched his eyes and his sight was not restored; if that touch had no healing, what was the use of going off by himself in the dark? Suppose he had turned about and not obeyed the command! But he went, and *washed*—and then he came back seeing. In telling the people about it he said, 'I went, I washed, and I re-

ceived sight. I obeyed and I received.' That's the way to get more faith—obey. Obey all God wants and He will give you all the faith you want."

Mollie was thinking that she did not obey very well; she did not even know half of the things she must do.

"Miss Olive!" said Leila, resting both hands upon the work in her lap. "I had a question laid up for you: I do not know how to read the Bible. I try to tell the mission girls I am teaching, but I do not know how myself."

"She has just told you," said Menzies, in a tone new to him; "read about that blind man as she did."

"I shouldn't have read all that between the lines."

"Of course not. *That* comes by exercise, like faith."

"Sometimes I don't read because I don't find what I want," Leila answered, wilfully.

"O, Leila, that's wicked!" Mollie said, again.

"Did you think I was good?" laughed Leila.

"It is my mistakes and discouragements that help me," said Olive. "I don't know what I should do without them. They are the making of me."

"I wish I could have some like them," said Leila; "mine do not seem to blossom into a new kind of fruit."

"How delightfully personal we are!" remarked Andrew, on the stairs, as he paused a moment.

"Oh, dear," sighed Leila, under her breath, "now our good time is over."

Opening the book, Menzies asked Leila if he should read again.

"Oh, I don't know! I wanted to talk!" she said, discontentedly. "Do take him off fishing."

"That's an invitation to take myself off," Menzies answered, lazily, "and your chamber is your castle and not to be invaded."

Andrew stopped on the threshold; the group made a picture pleasant to look at; Olive, with unusual color in eye and cheek, was hemming the brown gingham, Leila's hands were folded over a mass of pretty stuff in her lap, at the table Mollie was bending over her blackberry blossom; on the arm of the lounge Menzies balanced himself with his book in his hand.

"Shall I be the serpent and enter Eden?" Andrew asked, mockingly, his handsome face alight with fun.

"You don't have to enter," observed Leila, with her usual frankness.

He laughed and dropped down on the lounge beside the brown gingham; Olive's small rocker was near the head of the lounge within reach of her work-basket and her work.

"Napoleon remarked that Impossible was a word found only in the dictionary of fools," said Andrew, "but I don't believe he ever tried to get up a picnic in a pouring rain."

"Or to read when girls were chattering," remarked Menzies; "this chapter on the 'Responsibilities of Wealth' doesn't appear to be aimed at me."

"Or me; because I have no responsibility," replied Andrew, in gayest humor.

"You heard somebody say that he who avoids responsibility does not avoid accountability," reminded Leila, sharply; "you looked at me in church when he said it."

"Yes, I thought he was hitting you."

"How it makes me feel at home to hear you two quarrel!" said Olive, smiling.

"I wish I could think of something else to amuse you," said Andrew.

"I am not languishing to be amused," Olive returned. "These aprons are a great amusement. What a pity you two gentlemen cannot sew!"

"We reap, instead," replied Andrew, seriously.

"I hope you reap something better than a wretched pun," retorted Leila, provoked.

"I shall have to separate you two," threatened Olive.

"By sitting between us," cried Andrew, "do."

"We are cousins, aren't we, Menzies?" asked Mollie, looking up from the troubled contemplation of her work, "and we don't have to be separated, do we?"

"No; I tell you all my secrets," Menzies answered, in a happy voice.

"I wish I had one to tell," said Andrew, plaintively. "Mollie, what is the last he whispered to you?"

Mollie's look, at once distressed and delighted, brought a shout of laughter.

"I will tell you," said Menzies, quietly, but in a tone that stilled them, "my five years' engagement is broken. Miss Graham will some day be married to some one else—a German physician and

professor; her mother was a German lady, and this gentleman is a cousin whom she became acquainted with for the first time on the other side of the water."

Olive's fingers trembled, but she held her needle firmly and gave it a push through her work; the next instant Mollie was on her feet pouring out the whole incoherent story; afterward she wondered how she dared; but how could she let them think that this girl had thrown him away because he was not the truest and best man that could be—and he had been so kind to her and never thought of himself—and then she was frightened and burst into tears and ran away sobbing.

"Mollie's version has its foundation in truth," Menzies went on with the same quietness, "but I have not behaved half like a man. Her devotion to me overcame her. I intended merely to state the fact of my release—it is a sad thing when one is tempted to speak of such a breaking as a release—Miss Graham deserves to be as happy as I hope she will be. The only comfort I can get out of my share in it is that I have made her as little unhappy as I could."

With his book in his hand he went away. He

had not once glanced toward the silvered head bent low over the work.

"How I must have hurt him!" exclaimed Leila, penitently. "My tongue will be the ruin of somebody."

"What a blessed child that Mollie is," said Andrew. "Who would have thought the pluck was in her? But perhaps it is another case of cousin."

"No, it isn't," Leila answered, decidedly.

"There's something in him, too," said Andrew, patronizingly, "some fellows will swear to their own hurt and not change, as the Bible has it."

Like Shakespeare, the Bible was to Andrew Croft a book of fine quotations.

"Perhaps Mr. Croft does not remember the connection of the words he has quoted," said Olive, surprising herself by the clearness and evenness of her tones.

"No, I don't; what is it?" he inquired carelessly. "I have a way of getting at half a thing."

"The psalm opens: 'Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?' And among those chosen is he who sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not."

"Then I shall never get into that holy hill," he answered, merrily. "My common sense keeps me out of such tight places."

"It ends: 'He that doeth these things shall never be moved,'" said Olive, still evenly and clearly, and wondering at herself.

"He will not be, he has that air," commented Leila. "I didn't think I should end by admiring him devoutly."

"And it will be an experiment now that may pay," returned her cousin, not caring to conceal his vexation; "he's a dull old fellow with not two ideas in his head."

"His one idea isn't to do well by himself," retorted Leila, "and let the world sink or swim."

"Well," returned her cousin, his good humor returning, "they say there's a special providence over fools and children, and he is certainly provided for. Olive, can't you think of something beside your work?"

"Yes," said Olive, with her eyes full of sunshine, "let's put on our waterproofs and go out in the rain. The brook will be something to see, and I really believe I see brightness in the south."

"Where your ship is sailing from," reminded Leila. "Let's go out and look for a sail."

"Or a cloud as large as a man's hand," suggested Andrew; "not that I would put another cloud in your sky, Olive."

"But where is the beauty of a sky without clouds?" Leila questioned. "Miss Olive, I can't see any brightness," she added, going to the window; "it's pouring harder and harder. But there's Hiram! I heard Mrs. Di tell him her boarders would be crazy for the mail. I shall hear from papa; he's my lover and writes every day."

Her feet did not seem to touch the stairs as she ran down; Diantha said she herself would die of heart-disease, brought on by fright, before that flying girl went home.

"Do you believe half that story?" inquired Andrew, turning to Olive.

"What story?" returned Olive, gaining time.

"That story of Mollie's about Menzies."

"He did not contradict it."

"No; he wanted to make himself a hero! He isn't the kind of stuff for sentiment; he's too fond of his beef and bath-tub; he's as human as I am."

"Wasn't that a human thing to do?"

"He has pulled the wool over your eyes. I would like to be a woman just for the sake of believing in men."

"Isn't it as well to be a man and believe in rare women?"

"Don't you believe in rare women?" he asked.

"I most sincerely and ardently do."

"Then if I were a woman I should believe in good men and rare women."

"Don't you now?"

"When I see them; I don't see them," he said, sharply.

"I am sorry for the people you associate with, then," was Olive's mischievous retort.

Leila returned with a bundle of letters and papers; her face was very serious.

"Hiram brought a telegram, too—for Mr. Menzies—with bad news. His father! He is very ill."

"But he saw him yesterday," said Andrew.

"He is subject to bad attacks, Mrs. Di said. She talked like a cataract, and told him all about it, and that he mustn't be surprised to find him gone—at his age, and wasn't this the third one? I ran away from her."

"What did he do?"

"He told Hiram he would go to the next train, and he just has time to catch it. He would have forgotten his hat if Mollie hadn't got it for him. I am glad we were not away on our drive."

Olive was glad for all that morning.

"I'm glad he saw his father yesterday," said Leila, holding her father's letter with a loving tightness in her fingers.

Olive had several letters from girls she had taught; when she had made a friend she could not let her go; she was laying up friendships for old age, she told Leila. It was hard to read her letters; after finding that she was getting nothing out of them she slipped them under the work in her lap.

Mollie and Andrew chatted like two girls over their news; the letter from Indian Territory, where Dr. Provost was busy, was lengthy (written an hour before midnight) and as interesting as though he intended it for the newspaper. Leila cherished every scrap he wrote to her. Two letters from Alaska were filled with gossip and travel. Olive sewed and tried to listen. When the train whistled, she knew Allan was on the way to his father. He loved his father. How merry the talk had been an

hour ago! How merry it was now between the two over their letters!

Would Miss Hannah like her aprons with strings or to button? She would go down and ask Diantha.

"Oh, with strings," said Diantha, decidedly. "And you knew Menzies has gone? I don't believe he will be back this summer."

XIII.

WHEN IT CLEARED.

"My heart is quiet with what I know,
With what I hope is gay."

—GEORGE MACDONALD.

THE tap at Olive's door announced a visitor; it was Leila, in waterproof and rubbers; it was two hours after dinner and still pouring.

"I had to run away," Leila explained. "Mrs. Di got us down in her parlor, by hook or crook, and there she talked and talked. I never saw her in quite such a flow of spirits and talk. Andrew is vastly amused and helps along by pretending to be interested. She made poor little Mollie show him all her paintings and her school prizes, and she would make her dance a jig for his benefit if the poor child knew how. She was so sweet about it; I knew it was hurting her, and he stopped the show at last by asking Mollie to run up to my room for

the book he was reading. Then I ran off. She talked about Cousin Menzies and Uncle Aaron for an hour, giving a detailed account of all their business and home affairs."

Leila's indignant head shook the hood of her waterproof off, and she placed the muddied rubbers on a bare place on the floor.

"She says Uncle Aaron has heaps of money and his children will be rewarded by his stinginess. Three sisters and three brothers! It would take a fortune to make them all rich. I suppose ten thousand is riches to her, and he may have that sum to divide around. Andrew tried to get her off by telling her that it has been estimated that if all the wealth of the United States should be equally divided he—Mr. Menzies—would not have three thousand dollars; not that Mr. Menzies was alluded to in the estimate," said Leila, laughing. "He told Mollie to pack his things and send them. He left good-bye for all of us, Mrs. Di said, and looked at his watch and didn't have time to come up and say it. I'm sorry his work is interrupted—isn't that heartless? But I was so interested. Mrs. Di will never know that I did it for nothing but out of sheer idleness. I told him if he ever

made me a present, I should not regard him as a gentleman; with which threat he was crushed. Olive, dear, I came to be rested."

The little thing cuddled herself into Olive's lap and wound both arms about her neck.

"I could not sleep last night! The wheels in my head went round and round; I was so penitent, and disappointed, and discouraged, and humiliated, that I had to cry and cry."

"Poor child," soothed Olive, in her loving voice. It was very sweet to give this girl the motherliness she had missed.

"I've done a dreadful thing."

"You have told me that before."

"But this time it is the worst I ever did. It kills me with remorse and penitence. You know Howard Davidson—the dearest, fellow in the world—as good as a minister and as bright as a lawyer—I *determined* I'd make him like me. I did my best, because he called me an ugly little thing once, and said I was all brains and had no heart—and I did; he did like me, he liked me too much, and wrote and told me so, and I wrote him such a letter and told him I only did it out of fun, and didn't mean for him to care in earnest, and I am ashamed

enough of myself to die. I don't deserve the sunshine to shine on me. I didn't think I *could* be so wicked; I don't believe God ever *can* forgive me, I've asked Him over and over. I have always despised heartless girls, and now I am one of them myself. And he answered and said because I was a Christian he had trusted me. I don't believe I am a Christian, at all. And the worst of it is, I am afraid I would do it again if I had another temptation. I love to have people love me. I haven't anybody but papa. And love is too good a thing to get in such a mean way. I never can love him any better than I do; I'm cooling towards him all the time; I'm tired of him and I meant only friendship. We had church-work together; he's a great worker and thinks I am, and we were always on committees, and I had no bother—and he suggested that we should go through life a committee of two! And I'm angry and ashamed and don't believe I'm half as much to be blamed as I think I am."

"Suppose you do not try to weigh the responsibility—he has his share of it: be forgiven and that's the end of it."

"But I can't *feel* forgiven. And because I can't

I get angry with Howard. O, Olive, I didn't know I was so wicked," she moaned.

"It is the wicked ones who have the forgiveness, dear."

"I seem to think I must be punished first."

"You are punished, you may need more punishment; but you have the forgiveness just the same. Take both from the same Love and Wisdom."

"I want to be punished," acknowledged the heart-broken voice. "I am so disappointed in myself."

"David was forgiven and punished. I think we are apt to think that the Lord forgives and forgets; He forgives and remembers—He remembers us, so lovingly and tenderly, and remembers our sin, hating it and not bearing to look upon it; David said, 'I have sinned.' And the Lord told him how he would punish him, and he said in the same breath, 'The Lord also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die.' The forgiveness is carried on all through the life we live endlessly; the punishment stops in this life, and sometimes after a very little while. Both are in God's hand with every sin He forgives."

"But ~~we~~ don't do so ; we don't both punish and forgive," Leila urged.

"We are not wise like God ; we know how to forgive ; we don't know how to punish."

"The punishment tempered with forgiveness must be very sweet."

"It is," Olive said. "I know."

"Do I tire you ? I want to sit just so. It rests my back and it rests my heart."

"It rests my heart, too. And I will tell you what I was thinking when I heard you on the stairs. It came to me to-day. I was sitting here thinking over something that troubled me—once I was impulsive and did an unwise thing. I thought I was very unselfish and right and doing what the Lord would tell me to do if I could hear His voice, and I opened the Bible and found something new. It was about some one who was always rash and impatient, and I found the reason he had for it this time ; he misinterpreted some of the Lord's plain words. That night before the Lord went into the Mount of Olives He talked to His disciples, and He told them something new. He asked them if they lacked anything when He sent them out before without purse and scrip and shoes, and they said

‘Nothing.’ Then He told them that the times had changed, and they must provide themselves with these things; they would even need swords, and if they hadn’t one must even sell their garments to get one. So what must impulsive, jumping-at-conclusions Peter think but that his time had come to use one? And he did that very night, and cut off the ear of Malchus. And then my comfort came in the Lord’s sympathy and ready help. He did not let Peter’s rashness hurt Malchus very long.”

“But perhaps He doesn’t send help now as soon as that.”

“He sends it soon enough. Be sure of that.”

“I was selfish and mean—you were trying to be unselfish.”

“Yes, I think I was. I was afraid—afraid of my father’s anger. Had I trusted my Father in Heaven—I should not have been so afraid of my father on earth. But I was young. Little girl, you are very young. God does not expect old wisdom of young heads,” Olive comforted.

“But He expects us to do as right as we know.”

“Then how disappointed He must be!” said Olive.

"I don't like to have Him disappointed in me."

"He is not disappointed in your penitence and humiliation and tears."

There were tears now ; Olive did not speak, she let the tears come.

"Are you happy about that now ? Or has it hurt all the time ?" Leila asked, longing to know how another girl had been impulsive and rash.

"It has hurt—at times. I am very quiet about it now. I never put it in words before. How this summer is bringing me out of myself ! Another one like it would make me frank and demonstrative."

"I hope you will have another one like it—for my sake."

Do you know what I would love to do with you ?"

"Push me off your lap—all my ninety-four pounds !" Leila guessed, with her mischievous laugh.

"I would like to put you on my bed and cover you up and see you go to sleep."

"And I'll listen to the rain and go to sleep."

Leila did not know how a mother comforted ; but she knew how God comforted.

When she awoke the sun was shining. She lay still looking about the chamber.

Olive sat at the table writing; she wrote hurriedly, and then paused, and sat thinking with her pen held carelessly. She had not spoken to Leila of a Prayer Circle to which she belonged; in the spring, among the many letters she brought from the mail in that pleasant walk through the woods, was one from a friend whom she had not known for years, excepting through the lively interchange of letters. This friend wrote about a Prayer Circle she was forming, and asked her to become the eighty-seventh member. "It will bring no demand upon you, excepting in your hours of prayer. Many of the members are unknown to each other and their lives touch only in this way. We believe the Lord's words that if two or three agree in what they ask they shall be heard and it shall be done for them. Ask for any or all of us what you ask for yourself, as often or as rarely as you will. You will be within the circle of the blessing that is being showered down upon us. Yesterday I was greatly helped to do a disagreeable duty; when it was over, and well and *easily* over, the truth came to me anew and with power—'Somebody is praying for you.'

I do believe Christ presents these prayers to His Father. I believe He is praying for us too."

Enclosed was a printed slip, descriptive, by numbers, of the members of the circle.

Olive wrote against number eighty-seven: "One who wishes to be helped in forgetting herself and to have her eyes opened to the need of those immediately about her, and to be made peculiarly ready to meet it."

The name and address of any member were given upon application to the friend who formed the circle; Olive had obtained the name of a young girl in a hospital, that of a missionary's daughter in Honolulu, and learned that the young school-teacher who found teaching "up-hill work" was some one she had seen and could not forget, and in this way found that she was willing to be helped. She was writing to her when Leila opened her eyes and lay still, watching her.

"Olive, I am thinking—I cannot think it out—is everybody punished for sin, everybody who is forgiven?"

"What do you think?" Olive asked, with her class-room manner.

"I cannot think. I thought David's case might be peculiar."

"I suppose every wound leaves a scar."

"Literally, yes."

"You care, peculiarly, perhaps, for the good opinion of—people whose opinion you care for."

"Lucidly put," laughed Leila, pushing another small pillow under her head.

"When you do something to lose that, you are punished."

"I *am*, that's true," assented Leila, with laughing emphasis.

"If I lose a friend I might keep, by carelessness or selfishness, I lose all she might be to me or do for me."

"I know I have lost in that way. I'm terribly careless about friendships; I let people keep hold of me if they care for me."

"Not making the best of our day of 'rest and gladness,' we are punished in ourselves; we don't begin to know how much we lose in losing, and not keeping, the Sabbath day holy."

"Oh, dear, you mean me! I didn't open the Bible once last Sunday and I did talk with Andrew upon light subjects; it was a very literary

conversation, and we enjoyed it, but I was smitten when I went to bed and thought how my day had gone."

"We are punished in not *getting* the good from people we know; we are punished for not *giving* the best in us."

"You know that is hard work," muttered Leila, giving a pillow a vindictive push.

"I did not know that hard work was the consideration," said Olive, nibbling the end of her pen holder.

"It isn't," Leila grumbled, laughing; "go on. Hit me again, and hit me harder."

"We are punished by not receiving the good we might have. We do not ask for it, or we ask selfishly."

"Well, we *are* selfish creatures."

"And must be treated then as selfish creatures. We are punished, in mental loss, if we read that which requires no thinking."

"Do I read so many novels?" inquired the girl, aggrieved, rising to lean on her elbow.

"Who brought home five yesterday from a walk to Monroe?"

"Andrew chose them for me. He's the greatest

novel reader! I told him they were trash, and he said trash was written for hot weather. I don't believe I shall do more than look through them anyway. Do you know all last week I was under a cloud, and couldn't get out from under it, and after reading Ephesians through with you, my mental atmosphere was cleared and I knew that it was a book I had been fascinated with. It raised doubts and did not answer them. I don't know that I am as clear-headed and pure-hearted yet as I was before I lived in that book, with those people. I told Andrew not to read it. *I am* punished for that."

"And forgiven?"

"I don't know yet; I hadn't thought of some of these things as evil. When I don't know what is the matter with me, and I am heavy hearted, and dull in seeing, I think now it is some punishment hanging over me. I think I am blue. I ought to be punished black and blue, and I'm glad I am. Olive," sitting upright and pushing her hair from her temples with both hands, "what a *merciful* thing punishment is!"

"It is a part of the loving kindness."

"I never thought of giving thanks for punishment; I think it must be in the forgiveness; He

punishes because He forgives. Oh, isn't it most terrible to be punished and not forgiven ! ”

Olive's pen went on with its rapid work ; Leila arose and brushed her hair.

“ Man's work shall be burned, but himself shall be saved,” Olive remarked, after a while, as she addressed her letter. “ I am afraid my *work* in life will become too much to me. I am not willing yet to do nothing. If I didn't find some little new thing every day, I should think I was a cumberer of the ground.”

“ And that is the way you talk to Andrew and stir him up to self-reproach, if nothing else.”

“ And after all, work is so little in itself. I am afraid of making an idol of it. I've had to tell myself to-day that it was not enough for the young ruler to keep the commandments, not enough to sell all he had and give it away, not enough to take up the cross, even ; he had to do all that and *then*—follow Him whom he called Good Master ; follow Him wherever He went.”

“ Olive,” Leila dropped the paper-cutter she had been playing with, “ it's the hardest thing in the world to do that. *I don't do it.* I'm having a selfish time this summer. I don't do anything I don't

want to do. There are many things for me to give up—and I thought I had given up ever so many. And then there are things for me to *do*. I love study too well.”

“No; you do not. Only love something else better.”

“I don’t.”

“What do you study for?”

“Love of it; pure love of it. I’ve been learning some of the most delightful and wonderful facts lately in science.”

“God made them; He made all truth. It all depends upon what you do with what you learn.”

“I don’t know yet.”

“Don’t you understand your tastes and sympathies?”

“I will do something; I am determined to do something beside stuff myself. Papa wishes me to study systematically, under teachers, this winter; he has not been willing before; but I can’t do it and keep house as he likes to have it kept. I proposed boarding, but he would be as uneasy as a fish out of water in a hotel or stylish boarding house. And there’s Andrew. He must have a house; his mother lives for society, and Andrew hates it.

There's a great deal to think of to keep our machinery running smoothly, with so many to entertain, and there must never be a jar. Papa writes that he has thought of a way out of it that will be a pleasant surprise to me. I can't come out of my books to settle a dispute between servants or to make the week's bill of fare, and papa must have variety. He doesn't see any reason why everything should not suit him, neither do I, if I had the time and the inclination. I think he is seeing that I cannot do two things with the perfection that pleases him. He says his plan will satisfy him and be just what I would wish for."

"I am curious to know," said Olive.

"He will not write it. Oh, I *hope*, but no—it isn't, it can't be—he knows I wouldn't wish for that—Olive, he cannot be going to be married!"

Leila's eyes grew large through startled tears.

"No, dear," said Olive, very sorry for the girl who had had her father all to herself ever since her babyhood, and who had been encouraged in wilful ways, "I cannot believe that. He knows you; he would not torture you with unpleasant suspense."

"I will give up my studies, I will keep his house

exactly as he wishes," she cried, excitedly; "tell me, Olive, are you sure?" bending toward her and catching her hand.

"As sure as that I know his heart toward you."

"I suppose he's human; I wish he wasn't."

Olive sealed her letter; Leila pricked the cretonne with the point of the paper-cutter.

"I suppose you've got to read to that old mother down-stairs; what's the use of having daughters if they don't read to her?" Leila asked, crossly.

"They are too busy. Canning and carpet rags, and patchwork and dressmaking are quite enough for one rainy day. The old lady is quite literary in her tastes, although she will contend that her geography published sixty years ago is ahead of the handsome, illustrated books of to-day. I told her discoveries were being made all the time, and she said it was better to know a little and know it well."

"What would she think of a spectroscope that decides about the materials now in a state of combustion in the sun?"

"Go down with me and tell her."

"I'm glad the sun is shining. Olive, I do feel punished and I'll try to get at the bottom of it."

That evening she solemnly asked Andrew if he were aware of the punishments in his life.

They were sitting at the dining-room table; he was playing jack-straws with Mollie; Hiram stood looking on; he was not in his shirt sleeves; now that her boarders had come, Diantha insisted that David should wear coat and collar in the dining-room. She said Hiram was a fop already and too glad of opportunities to dress up: she really believed he would like to dress like Mr. Croft; perhaps Mr. Croft would favor him with some of his handsome cast-off clothes.

This taunt had been flung at the young fellow when he appeared in the kitchen after supper in his best suit, with a grammar in his hand.

Mollie's eyes kept the angry retort in his eyes from breaking into words.

"I'll study to-night," she said, "you can make believe teach me grammar."

The grammar lesson was in progress when Andrew entered with his box of jack-straws.

"Mollie is engaged," Hiram remarked rudely.

"No, she isn't," Diantha called out from the kitchen. "Mollie, do what Mr. Croft wants you to."

Hiram closed his book; Andrew showered the jack-straws on the table and gave Mollie the hook to pick them up.

"I haven't any," Andrew answered lazily, with a glance at Leila, "unless you are one of them by bringing such questions up. Mollie, steady nerves are a great blessing to a woman. Don't joggle! joggling is bad for the thing that comes next."

"When *you* come next," said Leila, sharply. She was out of patience with him to-night.

David was reading aloud to his wife in the kitchen—Lucy Ann had gone home for the night—his loud "ha! ha!" burst out every now and then; Leila wondered why he had to mumble at family worship when he could laugh so distinctly at a newspaper joke. "Listen," he called out to the people around the dining-room table, "'No person having tried one of these air-tight coffins will ever use any other.'"

"That's as bad as something I saw to-day," remarked Andrew, when the laugh subsided. "'Babies having taking one bottle of my soothing syrup will never cry any more.'"

"I learned something to-day about Augustine,"

said Hiram, with his eyes on the game, as Mollie carefully lifted a straw; "he lived about the year 400, and did not believe there were people on the other side of the world."

"All the better for him," observed Andrew, grimly, "this world is too full of people for anybody's comfort."

"Charles Dudley Warner says he wouldn't kill the smallest child, though," said Leila, "even when they get into his garden."

"There!" exclaimed Mollie, "I've juggled."

"People are not thrown together like jack-straws," moralized Leila. "Oh, here comes Olive; she has a steady hand."

"Hiram and I are to have a grammar lesson," said Olive, "he wishes to learn how to teach grammar without a book—without the child having a book."

"Is that grammar—that sentence?" inquired Leila. "It sounds awkward."

"—ly," spelled Olive, seriously.

The jack-straws and the grammar lesson went diligently on.

It had been a good day for several people.



XIV.

HER HIDDEN LIFE.

"Every kindness done to others in our daily walk, every attempt to make others happy, every prejudice overcome, every truth more clearly perceived, every difficulty subdued, every sin left behind, every temptation trampled under foot, every step forward in the cause of good, is a step nearer to the life of Christ."—DEAN STANLEY.

THREE weeks after that rainy day Diantha went to the city to spend the day ; in the morning she did some shopping, in the afternoon she attended the funeral of Allan Menzies' old father. She came home in the evening train laden with bargains and news. At the breakfast table the next morning she unloaded herself ; Lucy Ann and Mollie had already examined and commented upon the bargains ; the news she reserved, by a strong effort of will, until they were all at the breakfast table.

"I was *that* surprised, you may believe," she began, in the tone of one having a long story to tell, "when Cousin Sarah Menzies—she lives next door to Uncle Aaron and has for years and years—told me all about it. I wouldn't believe it, if it hadn't come so straight. I went there the first thing and left my umbrella, for the clouds all blew away, and told her I should be back before the funeral, so she asked me to be sure to be in time for lunch at half-past twelve, which was earlier than usual, on account of the funeral. David, you are cutting that steak the wrong way; Miss Leila is very particular about her steak; give her that piece under the bone. Well, Sarah told me all about it. I guess we sat at the table a good hour, she and I all alone. Menzies has never written a word except that first note to Mollie, so it was all news to me. His father was unconscious when he got there and although he came out of it and spoke a little, he never knew much. He always knew Allan, and kept him night and day by him. They telegraphed for Amzi, he's the youngest, about Mollie's age; he was away fishing; I guess he's always away fishing, or away something, and don't amount to much, and Butler was home—he boards

home; he's clerk in a big house; he's next to Allan, and over forty, and the three girls come between; girls between thirty and forty, though; I haven't been in Uncle Aaron's house for ten years, he and I couldn't get on together; he had ways of his own. Well, the children were all there all the time. And the thing that surprised me was that the old man isn't so rich after all! He *had* to be stingy; Allan and Butler have always had to help the girls. It's true he retired from business years ago; but he was afraid of losing the little he had, and he knew Allan and Butler would help along. Sarah says ten thousand dollars is about all there is! What surprises me is that those girls haven't done something all these years: so many ways open to women, and in the city, too. Miss Vanema, those Indian-meal cakes are as light as they look—Hiram, pass them; Mollie, child, bring in another griddleful, your aunt has got them ready. Miss Leila, I made that maple syrup myself. Of course the housekeeping will go on just the same, his death hasn't changed any thing. Those boys will have to keep up the house as usual, or Allan will, for Butler is engaged and is to be married this fall. Sarah says this won't hinder it, he told her, and that he will never

bring his wife home to three sisters-in-law and two brothers-in-law, and the girls must do with less, or go out in the world and get more. Amzi ought to spunk up and do something for himself, if he don't for them, but Sarah says it isn't in him. He's crazy for a farm, but nobody's got money to buy him a farm. I saw him after the funeral. I took a cup of tea with them and he asked me if I wanted somebody to help around a month for his board and learn farming, and I told him plainly that we had enough to help around and enough to do to make it go around! I don't want any lazy relations about me. Menzies paid his board here two weeks last summer, and he may come again for as long as his brother will promise to pay good board. He did learn to plow, and David said he made as handsome a furrow as he ever saw. I did feel sorry for the girls—their mourning is as handsome as though their father had left them ten thousand apiece—and they went so still about the house. Abby is stout, like Menzies, she's housekeeper; Letty is pretty and thin, and she's the dressmaker; she hasn't learned any trade, but she has taken it up; and the youngest is a delicate looking thing, and they all pet her and let her do fancy work. They have a girl, I don't see

how they can afford it; I guess they can't after Butler takes his board money away. I asked Abby if it wouldn't be a good plan to take a few boarders, single gentlemen, clerks or something, but she said she had never thought of such a thing. Jane is going to Dazey for two weeks, where an old aunt lives, and the others will take their turns, even Amzi goes there. This Aunt Betsey—I've heard of her—has a small farm, if it isn't too small to call a farm, and she would like Jane, that's the youngest, all the time, if she would stay. I asked Abby what they would do when Allan—they all called him Allan there, of course—went off to Germany. And she told me as cool as you please that he never *would* go. And *that's* my crowning piece of news! So happy they all are over it! Jane said she couldn't sleep for joy the night Allan wrote about it—of course, he wasn't there to hear all this. David, I knew you would spill your coffee—do take your spoon out of your cup. It makes me fly to see it there! And Abby said she felt that it was a providence that he is given back to them, and Letty said it happened just in time to help them bear their father's death, for they didn't know about Butler's engagement—of course, he wasn't

there either—until after their father was taken sick ! They don't know how it came around, and I suppose we never shall, but it was only a day or two before he went home that he wrote it, and it happened while he was here, but his engagement is off for good after all those devoted years, and after his telling me that he would always *stay* engaged ! It is one of the mercies that do happen in this life ! For Virginia is so rich that she could marry a poor man twice a day if she wanted to."

"The same one, let us hope !" said Leila, seriously.

"But what the blow of it is to him no mortal tongue ever can tell. Just as she was walking across the room, too. Miss Vanema, you haven't eaten one thing. What can I get for you ? I hadn't oatmeal this morning, because I had these Indian cakes, and you said last week you had never tasted anything so good. There is some cold oatmeal, shall Mollie put it in the oven ?"

"No, thank you."

"I never saw him look worse—his father's death and all ! He has a broken-hearted look in his eyes ; watching and all, too ! And his hand wasn't so well as when he was here ; Abby said that was

because he was tired out, and that didn't worry her. He spoke cross to Jane's little pug, and it did me good, it sounded so human. If he's cross, he'll live through to it. It worries me to see a man *too* patient. Not that I am worried very often that way. Miss Leila, I found a gingham for Mollie, exactly like yours, only hers is pink where yours is blue! As good a quality, and paid only eighteen cents, and you said yours was twenty-five. I was wondering who would pay the funeral expenses—everything was very handsome, and so many coaches; and their plot in the cemetery is among the best; his two wives are there; Amzi's mother and Jane's mother were his second wife; Jane is five years younger than the other girls."

It was raining this morning; not a soft, warm rain, falling in comforting drops, but hard, chilling, cheerless, as if there were not one sheltered spot in the whole world where one could be comforted.

"Miss Vanema, what in the world? Mollie, think of something that Miss Vanema will eat!" Diantha set down her cup of hot, strong coffee and looked distressed.

"Get a rose leaf, Mollie," suggested Andrew, "a nice, tender one."

Mollie sped out in the rain and hurried back with her head and hands dripping, and brought a blush rose with three buds and a cluster of the yellow-green leaves.

"O, Mollie, thank you, it's the prettiest thing I ever saw," exclaimed Olive, as Mollie laid it in her hand.

"Are your feet wet?" asked her mother, "let me see them."

"There is something having a good time in this hard world," said Andrew.

"Yes, roses and birds," returned Mollie.

"Shall we have a fire?" Diantha inquired of the breakfast table.

"Yes," said Andrew; "Mollie, take your huge bunch of tiger lilies out of the fireplace and kindle us a fire."

It was not an old-fashioned fireplace, but Hiram brought logs and kindled an old-fashioned fire: Mollie pushed a chair cushioned in home-made fashion within the cheer of the light and heat for Miss Vanema, and Andrew and Leila brought their chairs and their books.

It required a strong effort of her will to keep Olive away from the snug solitariness of her cham-

ber ; she was weary to be alone, to think, to pray, to plan, to weep, perhaps, for suddenly her life had turned cheerless, like the day.

But Mollie had pressed her into the chair and picked up the rose when she dropped it, and kept her with the others, and somehow Mollie was making her talk. Leila had fancy work, Andrew pretended to be absorbed in a new book, Olive had her rose and the fire—she thought she had not anything else in the world.

“Miss Vanema, I never saw you idle so long a time before,” exclaimed Diantha, bringing in a peach basket piled with pea-pods and a milk-pan to shell the peas into. “It’s lucky Mollie picked them last night. Mollie, spread a big newspaper down for me to throw the pods on.”

“I can shell peas,” said Olive.

“And spoil your finger-nails. This world hasn’t hurt your hands yet.”

“Nor her heart,” added Andrew, dropping his book to fall into the talk, “it has hurt nothing but the top of her head.”

“And that’s the prettiest thing about her,” Leila retorted.

“Mr. Croft, may I look at your book?” asked Olive, with a smile toward Leila.

He tossed it into her lap, and moved his chair near enough to Diantha’s to drop the peas he shelled into her pan.

The book would be something to hide her eyes in and to keep her fingers still. She had been so quiet the last two weeks and now her heart was all in a tumult! It had come so near again, to be taken away. She had not stretched out her hand, but she had thought—she had been sure that this something good was ready for her taking and keeping. And now! If there were only some one to take up the burden for her for a little while—until she could catch her breath and learn how to bear it. She would have said to Leila, or to Allan, “The Lord will take it up for you,” but there was the old anxious query; how will He take it up? How could He do it so that her heart would not ache so! That other time, when she was a girl, it was only a girl’s passing sorrow, but this time all the strength of her life was in it. “The Lord *knoweth how*.” Did He know how to take this away and stop the choking in her breath? He knew about it all the time, why did He let her dream about it,

and hope for it ? Now she never could be sure that Allan cared at all, or ever had cared ; there was only work ahead ! She had thought work was all. Why was not work all ? she asked herself, fiercely. Why could she not be content to-day to help Mrs. Agnew make that dress for Con, and to talk to Miss Hannah when she came up-stairs to her to-night, and to answer Leila's questions, and to explain division in algebra to Mollie, and to write to Miss Tunison and say she would see her before cold weather came. Why weren't these things sufficient to fill her day and her life ? Why should her thoughts wander away from the business of the hour ? And then she had her Bible study all to herself, and that was her word from the Lord. Could she be joyful, knowing that she was *with* Him to-day, as she was yesterday ? She was joyful yesterday ; she was confident Allan would return as soon as his watch by his father's bedside was over. And was *that* what made her joyful ? Was she not only so human, but so weakly human, that her joy was in this old friend, found again ?

Was she so weak that she could not be joyful alone—with Christ ? Alone with Him in all the years that must come while Allan was the stay and

staff of his father's house, and nothing at all to her ? Diantha's incisive voice broke in : " It was the queerest wedding I ever attended. I would give all my old shoes to know how it ever happened at last ! But some folks do keep things to themselves. Folks say, and I believe it, that she was eighteen when she became engaged to him, and she was fifty-nine the day she married him. I never knew them when they wasn't keeping company ! They have walked home from Sunday-school together ever since I was big enough to go. Nobody knows the reason, but everybody surmises and has reasons of their own. It was a very sweet, quiet kind of a wedding, neither of them had father and mother and they acted like married folks and couldn't be teased about anything. They had waited so long they might as well have waited forever ; it made a deal of talk and fun, and somebody said a girl under fifty-nine wasn't old enough to be married."

" They have escaped the discipline," hazarded Andrew ; " probably they were afraid of it."

" Marriage seems to be the only kind of discipline that young folks are eager to rush into," said Diantha. " I was engaged at sixteen, and I thought I was made."

"Mollie shan't be," said Andrew.

"No; Mollie shall be twenty at least," replied Mollie's mother. "Married women need a great deal of everything to get along with! The Lord has to be ready to help them out of all kinds of tight places their husband's selfishness and thriftlessness and miserliness gets them into. *As a class*, I don't admire husbands. As individuals, there are some excellent specimens."

Leila lifted her head from her pretty work and asked a question.

"How do you know when you have made a mistake? Life isn't like arithmetic; there you know to a certainty the result of every step you take; but in life result seems to have nothing to do with it—if by result one means one's own happiness or success."

"Perhaps one's own happiness has nothing to do with it," said Olive, in a hard voice.

"What *has* to do with it, then?" demanded Leila, impatiently.

"What one *ought* to do," replied Olive, with less hardness.

"As if one *ought* to be married, or not to be married!" exclaimed Leila. "I should as soon

think of there being an 'ought' as whether or not I eat peas for dinner."

"I suppose Paul thought there was an ought in his dinner," Diantha's voice hurried in. "He said, whatsoever we do, whether we eat or drink, you know. And getting married is a great part of one's dinner."

Andrew laughed uproariously.

"Sometimes it is the whole of it," he said, "and if it is the whole of it, and one misses it, what then?"

"I suppose no marriage turns out wholly bad," meditated Diantha; "there's the discipline; one has to learn that life isn't all pleasure, somehow."

"Mrs. Di, you make me shiver!" cried Leila.

"You may as well shiver about that as anything else," said Diantha. "Young folks have got to shiver over some truths. Suppose you were married to a man who would have his own way, even thunder and lightning wouldn't stop him, what would you do?"

"What does a man do when his wife is like that?" queried Andrew, thinking of this wife's voice in heated contest in the kitchen early that morning and her remark, 'David, I shall do as I

please, and if you want to stop me, you've got to stop my breath.' "

"Women have to be like that in self-defence," was her quick retort.

"May I be helped to steer clear of them," exclaimed Andrew, devoutly.

"Allan Menzies has three women in his house who will have their own way," proceeded Diantha, "you can see that in half a day."

"Then I'd put them in a boat and let them float out to sea," declared Andrew, angrily.

"Perhaps he would be glad to," laughed Leila, "but they won't float."

"I don't see how it is *right* for one life to take such a grip on another life and hold it still and keep it in one place, and hamper it and hinder it, and keep it from being its natural self!" said Andrew, going on with his work of shelling peas. "I think those Menzies sisters are an outrage."

"What would you do?" inquired Diantha.

"I would make *them* do!"

"Then you would have to make them over. They have been waited on and spoiled ever since babyhood; Sarah Menzies says, 'They all find it so

hard to be poor,' and yet they were never rich. They must keep up a certain style, and they do it. They think Allan was born for their sakes, and he lets them think so, and will to the end of the chapter. Now that his engagement is broken, and it was a five-years' grievance to them, they will own him soul and body."

"I think he is *weak*, then," said Leila.

"I told you so," insisted Andrew; "he has a *weak* mouth. He gets into a rut and he can't get himself out. He will do anything for peace. I don't believe it is so much love as it is laziness. I took his measure."

"You!" laughed Leila. "You lazy fellow!"

"I'm not lazy enough to let a girl fall in love with me and carry me off."

"No, you are too lazy for any girl to do it."

"I'm not too lazy to shell peas for your dinner."

The book was Olive's refuge again. *Was* he weak? Suppose he were! Did he not all the more need a strong woman in his life? She had her money, and she could teach: she could help him; she had helped somebody all her life; she did not know how to live and not help somebody.

If he would only come back and tell her that he

needed her, that he could not do without her; were all men strong?

Had not Paul said another thing—"so laboring, ye ought to support the weak"?

Ought not Allan support his sisters? Was he not remembering the words of the Lord Jesus?

"There's the other brother, Butler," began Diantha again, "but he won't. There's a girl in the case; a girl that isn't his sister. And Anzi won't. There's himself in the case. I don't see how you can call Menzies either weak or lazy."

"He can't," interrupted Leila; "he's doing it to cover himself. I wish he had three sisters—"

"——to support him?" Andrew interrupted, complacently.

"You are a case of arrested development, my Cousin Andrew. But for your unfortunate money, you might be somebody. You are simply a *sacculina*, and you might have been a crustacean. A *sacculina*—I don't believe you know what it is—is only a mass of roots and films, and it might be a creature with six feet, and paddle through the water and live an independent life, providing for its own food and safety, and be a crustacean, in fact; as it

is, it is nothing but a parasite, living its worthless existence inside another creature."

Leila made pretty gestures with her long needle threaded with yellow wool, as she ended she pointed her needle at the tip of her cousin's handsome nose.

"Long live the *sacculina*!" he cried. "If it only lives where it wants to."

"I thought I had impressed you," said Leila, with severity.

"You did, with a sense of your—"

"What pesters me," Diantha had kept herself quiet fully a minute, "is how to save money. I've got to live in the mean time."

"Oh, no, you haven't," said Andrew; "we are not particular about that."

Mollie opened the kitchen door and put her head in.

"Mrs. Agnew says she doesn't know how to fit Con's dress, Miss Vanema, and is sorry to trouble you—"

"I will come," answered Olive, dropping her book and the rose in Leila's lap.

"No; bring her and the dress and Con in here," commanded Andrew.

"Hardly," said Olive. "Mrs. Di would not like her pretty dining-room to be invaded."

Mrs. Di did not reply that she would like it.

"Shall I, mother?" asked Mollie.

"Peas are clean dirt, and I can have *them* here," said her mother. "I don't want those people to get into a habit of running in here and bringing things."

"They haven't much longer to stay," pleaded Mollie, "and Con never saw a fire on the hearth."

"They are your Aunt Hannah's boarders."

"Miss Vanema isn't," muttered Mollie under her breath, as she withdrew her head.

Olive was glad to be summoned; she loved little Con, and this dress, fashioned out of a brown cashmere of her own, and trimmed with velvet Leila had found in her own trunk, would make the child a pretty and becoming dress to wear to church all winter.

While she was busy in a corner of the dining-room in the old house, Diantha's dinner bell rang; Con stood watching the progress of the work, now and then touching the soft material and saying how pretty and warm it was. Wrapping herself in a cloak she stepped out into the rain again. That

fire on the hearth would be comforting if she might have it alone; but the voices jarred, and the frequent laugh—her own life to-day was so far down and so far off that surface things touched her only to hurt her.

Andrew would watch her with kindness in every tone and movement, Diantha would be profusely solicitous for her to partake of everything upon the loaded table, Leila would not notice her at all, Mollie would hover about her with the air of a bird over its young.

"Come up to my room," invited and commanded Leila, when the dinner was over.

When they were within the shut door Leila said, standing on tip-toe and putting her arms about her, "I want to put you on my bed and see you go to sleep."

"Nonsense!" Olive said, energetically. "I have a dozen things to do."

"That is one of them."

"No; it isn't the half of one of them."

As she came up the stairs Olive had thought: I think if of one in Heaven the question were asked, What would you love most of all to do to-day? the answer would be: To be with Christ, to see His

face, to hear Him speaking to me, to have Him tell me something He would have me do. If that question were asked of me, on earth, to-day, would my answer be like that?

"What do you want to do then?" questioned Leila.

"I want to write a letter."

"Was there ever a time when you didn't want to write a letter?" asked Leila impatiently.

"I don't *want* to—when you will talk to me."

Then Leila relented and gave her a kiss.

"I want to write to an old lady I knew once when I was a girl like you; she was like a mother to me; she is very old now and remembers me and wishes to see me again. I was afraid she had forgotten me. I shall be so glad to see her again, and her queer little red house. I would like to be as loving to her as she was to me. She is an old maid—oh, you heard Diantha speak of her—she is the aunt of Mr. Menzies that his sisters go to see."

"And you knew *him*, then, too?" asked Leila, in slow wonderment.

"Yes, I thought I did. Perhaps I do not. Perhaps I do not now. I think I *feel* people rather than know them. He may be weak; but I think he

is strong. I don't see how he can do any different."

"I do," Leila burst out, "he can make his sisters and brothers see that he will not have all his blood sucked out of him."

"But," Olive gave herself a mental steadiness as she spoke, "everybody must live for somebody. If he has no one else to live for, I do not see why he should not *love* to give his life to them—his own blood."

"But if it happens that he has some one else."

"That is a question," still steadying herself, "and it certainly is a question how right that would be."

"If they were ill, or mentally unfitted, or if there were no work in this world for women to do—and then the two other brothers, what is their obligation?"

"One is young."

"*Young!* I am young; I am not twenty-one, and not a man; I could support myself to-day. And that Butler has no more right than Allan has; the girl Butler wishes to marry has no more right to him than the girl Allan wishes to marry."

"No; if there were some one."

And then in amazement, in dismay, Olive bethought herself and stopped. Was this girl pleading for Allan's rights, the girl he wished to marry? Had these few weeks wrought this mischief? Was there some one else—would there always be some one else pushing in between herself and something she wished for?

The world *was* full; but was not God in the world? About that one pool of Bethesda were five porches and a multitude in them waiting, and it was only the first who stepped down that was healed. Would she want to push, and jostle, and step down?

"You think there can't be any one so soon? Perhaps there can't. And he is not very attractive, so middle-aged and quiet and bookish, with no money and no position; I should not think a girl *would* be attracted. Middle-aged people have other things to think of; marriage belongs to a younger time; he told me one day that my age was the best time for forming friendships, that young hearts loved easily; it was the *natural* time for choosing and love was more unselfish. A Scotchman told him that in Scotland girls married at seventeen, it was not thought too young; twenty-

three was the average age in the United States, and he was not sorry it was so young. Men were happier and better, too, that married before they were as old as he is, and happy homes were the safeguards and blessings of the world. I do not think his own home is so very happy, do you ?”

“I don’t know,” said Olive, “he talks so little about himself.”

“I wish he might have one now ; he has been good to other people all his life. I don’t *like* to have unselfish people wait until they get to heaven to be happy.”

“I don’t believe they do,” said Olive smiling.

“But I mean to have what they want most, what they naturally want.”

“You mean the sweet, unspoiled nature—”

“I don’t know what I mean ! I want this world to be a happy place ; I don’t want people to spoil other people’s lives.”

“As Eve spoiled Adam’s.”

“And men and women have ever since, I suppose ; that’s what I don’t like.”

“It would be queer if you did,” Olive laughed.

Leila discovered several letters in her writing tablet that had been waiting through a sunshiny

week to be answered, and she sat down with a gloomy determination to fill them with her present views of life.

On second thoughts, Olive did not write to Miss Tunison; she did not care to have Jane Menzies read her letter and write a report of it home to her brothers and sisters; to bring herself fully back to the old lady's memory of that summer she intended to mention several incidents, and she might wish to bring in the name of the other one who made it an ever-to-be-remembered and thankful-for time of work and rest. Now it seemed as if it were the pivot on which all her life was turning.

"I don't see why," Leila sighed over her letter.

Olive was at work upon the sleeves of Con's dress, she took no audible notice of the sigh. Leila had a way of answering her own questions when she was left to herself.

Did she see why?

Although Christ loves the "least" among His brethren so dearly that He counts service given to them given to Himself, yet He suffers them to be naked, and sick, and hungry, and in prison. And then she saw why. It was that the service might

be given ; it was for the sake of those who loved Him and gave for His sake.

And those who could not give, the sick, the naked, the hungry, and the prisoners, gave themselves to be given to, for His sake. They could not give for His sake ; not clothing, nursing, food, or comfort in prison ; but they could give their bodies to suffer, as they did if they accepted His will in the sorrow and privation He sent.

For His sake, then, would one choose to give or to receive ? Would one choose to suffer or to give ? He said it was more blessed to give than to receive ; those who gave had the blessing of the Father. Had those who gave to their own this blessing ? Because your own, was one the less Christ's own ? Should one pass by one's own, leaving him naked, sick, hungry, in prison ?

Suppose one's own were idle, selfish ? The words were naked, hungry ; how did one come to be that after one was grown, but through misfortune or fault ? Not the wisest, strongest of His brethren, but the "least," perhaps not the ones you admired most, and loved the best.

There was her father ! But she did not like to think of her father, excepting with tenderest pity ;

and her mother, who never made one effort to grow stronger. Her mother was discouraged; people said she died because she lost heart to live. Her marriage was her life-long disappointment; how often she had told her that she hoped she would never marry a poor man and be miserable.

"Poor mother! poor father!" she sighed over her sewing. But they were both penitent before they died; and their bitterness had not embittered her life. But it had shadowed it.

"Olive Vanema," cried the girl, bending over the writing tablet, "there's not a bit of selfishness in you."

Was that because it had all been suffered out?

"There has been a great deal this very day. I have been full of selfishness and murmuring and ingratitude."

Leila laughed.

"I'd like to live in you for awhile. Oh, there comes that Andrew!" she cried, discontentedly. "He's splendid to have for a walking stick, but I do like to stand him in a corner when the walk is done."

He tapped, then opened the door.

"Do come in," his cousin grumbled. "I was

just saying something horrid about you, but I'm glad to see you all the same. You were invented to spoil our talks."

"You were invented to spoil mine. If it were not for you, I should have an hour with Olive once in a while."

"I'm going away the first of August anyway. Papa writes that I must. He'll come to me at Long Branch. He wants ten days of rest."

"The first of August is a long way off."

"Won't you go, too? You haven't been very happy here."

"I told you you had interfered," he said, good-humoredly. "Miss Olive, where are you going?"

"Must I go? I am becoming a fixture."

"Not here! At Diantha's!" he exclaimed, in pretended horror. "I thought you were going to work."

"Must I go to do it?" she inquired, playfully.

"Not with that woman and child on your hands, beside several other people. You have a decided talent for ignoring your friends and taking up the needy. I wish I were a poor woman with a little girl, and the little girl, too."

"You are womanish enough," replied Leila.

"That is a recommendation in your eyes."

"Not in Olive's."

"She is on the side of weakness; especially weak men," he said with a light, scornful laugh.

Olive colored, and he would have begged her pardon, had he dared; the next time he spoke to her his manner was especially kind; he was a selfish man, but he nearly attained unselfishness in his attitude toward Olive Vanema. Leila believed that Olive did not understand half his possibilities.

"I suppose," he began, meditatively, after a pause, during which he had been breaking the well-sharpened point of one of Leila's drawing pencils, "that I might marry one of the Miss Menzies, pension a second and get the third one a position as housekeeper in the family of a wealthy widower. But there's Amzi. I am beat on Amzi."

"I believe there's something poetical in his laziness," said Leila. "Poets love to fish."

"Because it gives them time to think up their rhymes," guessed Andrew. "I think I shall constitute myself a committee of one and make a procession of myself and head it and call on that young man in one of his leisure half hours and find him an occupation."

"It would give you something to do," observed Leila.

"Miss Olive, what would you like to make of me?" he questioned in his winning voice.

She looked up into his gentle, sunny-brown eyes and smiled. After all there was a witchery about him; what did make this good-for-nothing so lovable?

"I would rather take Amzi."

"You can catch him young."

"And I can't catch you at all."

"No," he said, gravely, "not to your satisfaction. 'Honest labor wears a lovely face' to all the world but me. I honestly wish I loved work. I would give up my worthless income if I could love work as heartily as this young fellow, Hiram Anderson. He said he wouldn't take ten thousand a year to be as idle as I am, and I told him I had to be satisfied with less than half that. The fact is I'm not a bad man, if I were I could spend money and have a glorious time, like a fellow I know who is running to destruction at a break-neck pace. I haven't even expensive tastes; I do not like particularly to spend money; I think I rather enjoy saving my money and knowing that this year I've

added to my little pile by not spending my income: there's no incentive strong enough to overcome my aversion to work—no pursuit allures me; if I were a woman I should enjoy housekeeping and society. You said true, my little cousin, I am womanish. If I were a philanthropist, Olive is thinking, I could find work and pleasure in one; I am not unselfish enough for that; I would rather berate good men for letting the world ache with its sin and misery than lift my little finger to help them. I like to be here because you girls are here; I can hang around till frost and then I want the luxury of my city home. Mollie amuses me, too. I expect I shall be married some idle day to be amused."

"You know you love to tramp," said Leila.

"When somebody will tramp with me. I like companionship about as well as I like anything. The pity of it is that my money is not the kind of gold to buy the kind I want."

"You dear boy," exclaimed Leila, moved into caressing his ear with the tip of her finger.

"Olive, what would you like to make of me?"

"I was thinking of something fine in an old letter; a letter as old as that hard worker, Paul,

'who first gave their own selves'—without that first, I don't wonder at the rest of it."

"Neither do I," he said solemnly, "but even that is something a man must do himself."

"I cannot make that of you."

"Would you if you could?"

"I would rather you would do it yourself."

"Speaking of Paul's letters," said Leila, "reminds me that I read that for a manuscript of the Gospels twenty-five thousand dollars has been refused. It is known as the *Evangelarium*; it is written in letters of gold on purple vellum; it was written in 670."

"That would help me believe—the mere fact of somebody believing twenty hundred years ago seems to help me. I believe seeing the original manuscript would do it," Andrew said in a tone as if reasoning with himself.

"You make me think of something so sad, Andrew," Leila dropped her pen. "Poor Keats in his terrible sufferings tried to get a copy of *Jeremy Taylor*; he said if he could read that he would believe. Shelley and Hunt had taken his belief in God away from him. He was in Rome, and the book could not be found there."

"Hadn't he a Bible?" asked Andrew.

"Not the original manuscript," said Leila, in her quietest tone.

"Oh," said Olive, "to think of hunting for *Jeremy Taylor* when one is dying! And one can have the Holy Spirit for the asking."

"Will that make you believe?" asked Andrew.

"Christ said He would lead us into all truth," Olive, answered; "and I know He does—every hour of the day."

Silence fell for a long while; Leila took up her pen again; she was writing to her father:

"I do believe this summer is good for Andrew. I never knew him unsatisfied before. What will stir him into manly life? I cannot but think there is something worth having in him. But Olive will never marry him; I am more and more assured of it. She is the kind to marry a man to bring out the best in him; but something in her keeps her from doing it. Perhaps it is the story you told me of her father and her poor discouraged mother."

Andrew watched her flying pen; this girl cousin of his was his admiration.

"Leila, do you know when Jesus Christ is first mentioned in profane history? I would like to

study His life from a standpoint outside of Scripture history."

"What for? The history of the Jews will tell you what unbelievers say of Him."

"I do not know that I can explain myself. I would like to think of Him as a man—as real as Alexander, or Napoleon, and then a man not like them, and then the man He was, and then as thinking it no robbery to claim to be the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh of man—I think that will help me."

He said "help me," as simply as a child. He had no intellectual pride; he had taken no rank in college above that of the average student; he told Leila that she had twice his brains. And Leila believed him.

"I've heard papa say that Tacitus contains the earliest mention by any profane writer; he said that in the nineteenth year of Tiberius one Christ suffered death by the sentence of the procurator, Pontius Pilate."

"Only 'one Christ' to him," said Andrew musingly. "Suppose that was all the world knew. I would like to find every thing of that kind there is and write it down and imagine what life would be

to me if that were all I knew; and what life would be to me if that were all I could know. I do repeat the Lord's prayer every night; I wouldn't like to go to sleep without that. And one night I was in a hotel in Russia—I had had symptoms of cholera—I went to sleep saying over and over 'Now I lay me down to sleep.'"

"Then you wished you were home, a clerk on a thousand a year, with no money to go tramping and no symptoms of cholera on our inhospitable shores!" said Leila, tantalizingly. "A poor fellow can get rich, but a rich fellow can't get poor."

"Leila, I am determined! I am going home to get a humble clerkship."

"Don't, for pity's sake," she protested, "go into business. Give men business. In England the heir of the millionaire does not lead an idle life: why should a little money spoil you? You needn't think you are leading the life of an English aristocrat, because you are not. The husband of one of Queen Victoria's daughters has a brother a tea merchant in Liverpool."

"Perhaps I aspire to French idleness then; a well-to-do Frenchman prefers uselessness and idleness to being a tea merchant."

"If it's only an *aspiration*, I rejoice in it. I didn't know you aimed at anything besides shiftlessness."

"Leila, you are cross to-day," he reproved, sweetly ; "there's a box of chocolate creams in my room ; you may have them if you'll take the trouble to get them."

"You precious boy !" she exclaimed, rising and flying off.

"Olive, tell me, *do* you admire Menzies for being such a fool as to let that girl marry him, willing or unwilling ?" asked Andrew, very earnestly.

"She didn't," answered Olive, composedly.

"But she might ; it was going on."

"It would have come to its own natural breaking, in this case, I think. It did not make him marry her, it simply kept him from marrying some one else."

"But you do not admire him for it ?" he persisted.

"No ; I do not admire him for it."

"I wanted to make you say that."

"But you know—" thinking it deceptive not to undeceive him, "some weaknesses have an attraction for us ; I acknowledge he was weak."

"But you love him for it."

"If the girl were my sister, my little sister, I think I should love him for being so gentle with her."

"For deceiving her!" he answered, contemptuously.

"For not opening her eyes rudely to see that she had deceived herself. Her illness prevented what he would have done in another case; you take no account of that."

"That is true," he admitted, "he couldn't be a brute."

"I can easily believe it all—life is very sad. 'The sad viscissitude of things' somebody puts it. And if it were not as glad as it is sad, who would want to live?"

"Often I do not. I am weary of life even when the sun is shining."

Leila and the chocolates did not appear; Olive forgot her work.

"I cannot be glad of *permitted* evils, not at the time I am suffering; but I am glad of the blessedness that is brought out of things permitted. Wisdom wills the blessings and permits the suffering."

"Wisdom permits me to lead a useless life, then, not *wills* it," he returned banteringly.

"*You* will it."

"I don't; I don't will anything."

"Martin Luther said no man was wicked because the unclean birds sometimes lit on his head; he was bad only when he tamely suffered them to build their nests in his hair."

Andrew laughed lightly and ran his fingers through his handsome hair.

"Tamely suffers! You think that is the story of my life."

"Oh, no, perhaps you resist and suffer all the same. I don't know how you resist."

"Olive, you *don't*. I resist the temptations of what you call idleness."

"Andrew, it is what we have to do, and that we have something to do, in this world, that makes existence in this world endurable. When Adam was driven from Paradise, he was blessed with the necessity of eating brow-sweating bread."

"But he had to dress the Garden while he was in it; wasn't that work?" Andrew argued.

"Not the hard kind, not the kind he needed after something came between him and God."

"You think there's something between me and God," he said, almost too low for her to catch the words.

"You know that better than I can tell you."

"I know there is. And it is more than what I do, it is what I *am*; what I was born you will say; my inheritance from that same hard-working, disobedient first man."

It had been Olive's inspiration all her life to have a great deal expected of her; Andrew's growth had been stunted because the few around him gave all, expecting nothing in return. His mother said he was all she had left, and he was a disappointment to her.

"Well, when the time comes," he remarked, with his usual way of thinking the time must *come* to him, and he had to stand still and wait for it.

"It comes all the sooner when we go out to meet it," said Olive.

His mind to-day was a revelation to her; with his own hand he was opening the door to his real self; still it was not easy to speak the next words; but she spoke them—aloud, and not to herself.

"From the *first* day—thy words were heard, was said to a man a long time ago. But they were not

answered the first day. The time came after three full weeks, but he prayed the first day."

"Praying isn't all," was the sharp reply.

"No."

"What is all?" he asked, humbly.

"For you? I do not know. Different answers were given to different people who came to Christ."

"I wish you could tell me."

"I am glad I cannot."

"I don't see why."

"Because then you would be—you might, be satisfied with what I said."

"Who can tell me now?"

"Do you remember what Peter said: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.'"

"Olive, no one believes it, but I am a hungry-hearted man. I don't believe Leila understands it. I believe this is a hungry world."

"I know it is."

Diantha's little trot was in the upper hall; Leila had left her door open.

"Miss Vanema, I know you like buttermilk. I brought you some."

She stood at the door with a pitcher and three glasses on a tray.

"Mrs. Di," exclaimed Andrew, rising to take the tray, "you would disturb a dying man to eat and drink."

"You don't look reduced to that," she retorted.

"Leila! Leila!" shouted Andrew, "come and bring the chocolates. Mrs. Di has come for some."

Mrs. Di seated herself without further invitation and munched the chocolates for half an hour; Olive sewed and let Andrew make his mischievous and Leila her sharp repartees.

"I left Mollie buried in that book of Miss Muloch's you gave her, Mr. Croft, *My Mother and I*. I took it for granted that it was safe reading."

"It's a bewitching title," said motherless Leila, "but I've heard it urged against her books that they were discouraging to girls because there no such sympathetic, understanding-without-a-word mothers outside of books."

Olive remembered when she had discovered that her mother was not like the mothers in some books, and had despised her in the measure in which she was not congenial and inspiring.

Afterward she had despised herself for not being a good daughter—not like the daughters in books.

“That comes by nature,” said Diantha, selecting two large chocolates out of the box. “I believe I understand Mollie before she understands herself. I have forbidden her to study so much with Hiram, Mr. Croft; he’s a good principled young man, but I don’t want him to become attached to her.”

“She has been the making of him, Mrs. Van Der Zee,” answered Andrew. “He told me he first began to want to be somebody for her sake.”

Diantha’s face darkened.

“*She* doesn’t think it. She’s as innocent of it as a lamb. David could no more find anybody to fill his place than he could to fill Mollie’s. He’s the object of strife between us. With David’s rheumatism he’s got to have a faithful man. He’s laid up in winter, as useless as a wet rag.”

“That is what sweet girls are for, Mrs. Di,” observed Andrew, “that’s what *you* were for.”

One of Diantha’s firm beliefs was that she had been the making of her husband; she softened visibly and helped herself out of the box Leila had left in her lap.

"There's so much to do in this world," she remarked, cleansing her finger-tips with her lips and thinking of the clams that must be opened for supper.

"And fifteen hundred millions to do it," laughed Leila. "You needn't worry, Mrs. Di. It will all get done."

"Not if I sit here talking."

"That's a part of it," said Andrew, "woman's part."

"Oh, that reminds me!"

Leila sprang up and got pencil and paper.

"I want to show you—I learned it; the Esquimaux have one word to mean *He goes away hastily and exerts himself to write*. Papa says my brain is a museum; and this is a curiosity; here it is, in English letters."

She planced a sheet of paper on Olive's lap, resting it on a book, and wrote slowly in plain letters—
AGLEKKIGRARTORASUARNISARPOK.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Diantha, "that doesn't make it any easier to talk."

"It's something to know one word of Esquimaux," said Andrew. "Leila, you were a born smatterer."

"Then I attain what I was born for, and that is something to be congratulated upon," she laughed uneasily, crumpling the paper in her hand.

It was disheartening for her father and Andrew to think so, when she believed she was nothing if not thorough.

Diantha went away with the tray and the empty pitcher.

"What a spider she is!" Andrew exclaimed. "She's about fifteen inches around."

"She would do for a London shop girl," said Leila, "where each girl has to squeeze her waist into a required number of inches to give a look of elegance to the place; from eighteen to twenty; fat or lean the elegance must be accomplished."

"Did you know that the word *waist* is derived from a word which signifies pressure or to squeeze?" asked Olive, bringing herself back from thinking of Andrew and his hidden life.

"What a commentary on womankind!" said Andrew. "And oh, what a creature this Diantha is! She prays that the kettle may boil and is all the time putting out the fire."

"Andrew, that's the best description of anybody you ever gave in your life. I am proud of

you," cried Leila, delighted. "I know she prays ; she says she prays in secret."

Andrew threw himself back upon the lounge ; Olive persisted in sewing, he thought her interest in it was pretended, that she might not have to talk. When she was silent, how silent she was ! In the silence—for Leila wrote silently, and Andrew was grim, and pulled the ends of his moustache and would not say what he was thinking in an audience of two—Olive's thoughts grew ; Andrew reminded her of the young ruler ; she did not know what became of him after he refused to become one of the disciples. Was his call not as clear and imperative as Peter's or John's ? Come and follow me ! Was Andrew called and was he refusing ? Or was his unrest, his longing, his hunger, his dull sense of being unsatisfied, an evidence that he was called ? Or was it only the unrest of his idleness ? Last winter when he sat on a high stool at book-keeping all day long and out at evening entertainments three evenings in a week, he had shown nothing of this. This country life was giving him time to think, and surely to think was good for him. It was folly to be hard upon him because he was not earning his bread and butter. But then she wanted him to be

interested in the bread and butter of some one else, or in what bread and butter stood for. Was it not as far astray in the Lord's eyes to worship *work* as to live in idleness? Her ideal transfigured and shaped her real life. Her own life was more to her than anything in earth or Heaven except the life of Christ.

"Olive, look up; you look too contented with yourself," Andrew implored. "Look up and tell me what I was born for, and I promise you, with all my heart and soul, I will do it."

Leila raised her eyes and listened.

"You were born," Olive was afraid to go on, but, breathing a prayer for the truth, she went on: "*to make yourself something different from what you were born.*"

"I declare," he said, vexed, "you would make a famous oracle. But I have given you my word."

She did not so much mind making herself disagreeable; but she was determined not to make the truth disagreeable; not any more disagreeable than it was in itself.

The next day Andrew asked Diantha for a lunch and started off early on one of his long

tramps. He returned at nightfall, moody and silent.

Olive was ashamed of herself that she had never spoken of him to the Lord; she had been discouraged about him and had let him alone. She had not loved him well enough to pray for him, or pitied him sorely enough; she had been confident there was nothing in herself to help his growth.

She did not have any sympathy with weak men. Leila told her that there was where she failed in compassion.

The day following the tramp was the Sabbath; he asked her to go to church with him, saying he would take Leila, also, and Miss Hannah. In his carriage there were seats for four when he chose to put the second seat in; he was doing something in earnest.

In the school-house a mile distant a Sunday school was held in the afternoon; one Sunday afternoon she and Leila had taken the hot, dusty walk, and she had taught a class of girls. She refused to take it regularly; she was not yet strong enough to be sure of her strength. Perhaps the thing she did instead was something not easily understood—Diantha certainly did not under-

stand it; she helped Hannah with the dinner dishes, so that Sarah Lib could go to Sunday school, and she dressed the ailing mother in her clean calico wrapper and brushed her hair, that Mary Jane might have the time to "read a chapter" in her own room, and she set the tea-table and made the fire and put on the tea-kettle, that Maria might stay with a friend after Sunday school and attend prayer meeting in the school-house in the evening.

Was it keeping Sunday when she was doing housework that she did not do on other days? Diantha told Lucy Ann that she made it an excuse not to go to Sunday school.

"She isn't *spiritual* minded, any way you can put it. I believe she loves that work — on Sunday."

On several hot Sabbaths that she was busy in the old kitchen, and often, one service found way for another, it was an inspiration to her for the first time to be glad that Christ gave physical healing on the Sabbath.

She was not strong enough for the midday walk and the teaching,—(had Andrew known that she cared to go to the school-house, she knew how glad

he would be to take her, but could she ask a favor of him ?)—after the long drive to the church in the morning, but taking it leisurely, the work in the kitchen was not too wearisome, and then—she was giving a Sabbath pleasure to these tired women. Perhaps at the school-house they would hear what she would love to speak to them. She hoped some of the physical comfort she gave struck all the way in; her cheery way of doing it certainly did strike all the way in.

“Miss Vanema,” protested the mild old mother one of these Sunday afternoons, “I’m afraid you’ll get all worn out. Rubbing my feet is the last straw; but it does put my life into me.”

“Oh, I don’t mind being worn out,” said Olive, brightly. “You know we shall be made all over new by and by.”

“Shall we ? Really ?” The old voice spoke with a new interest. “I’d like to be young; I get so tired of being old; I don’t like to be in the way; pa and me, we don’t. And the girls are such *pushers*; pa and me are always being pushed off while they rush about and work.”

“Do you know what I was thinking last night ?” Olive began; her tone was so eager that the old head

lifted itself to listen. "I was watching you two old folks. I was thinking how lovely it was to be through your work—you two have worked so hard, you have done so much for your children—"

"That's true. Pa and me has," with a gleam of placid contentment.

"Perhaps you worked for them more than you prayed for them."

The suggestion was like a breath in its gentleness.

"Well, I haven't ever been any great hand to pray for other folks. I was so cross and spiteful and tired out I had all I could do to get my own sins forgiven."

"But some people don't pray for their own sins to be forgiven, and we are so sorry for them. What I thought was that you two dear old people have this resting time *to pray in*. You don't have to be careful and troubled about your work any more, or doing for the girls, and you can be so quiet and loving and pray. Let me see, six girls! One for each day in the week, and every one of them for Sunday."

"Well, that *would* be nice," a smile stealing over the wrinkles, "it would give me something to think about."

"When Christ was on earth fathers and mothers went to Him to plead for their children. Don't you remember?"

"Yes, I know; I've read it. I used to read when I had good eyes. The girls are too taken up to read much to me, and I forget it—I tried to think of a Bible verse in the night when I couldn't sleep and I couldn't get hold of it."

"But you can always think how forgiving and pitiful the Lord is."

"So I can. That's easy."

"And you can always think of your girls."

"That's easy, too."

"You remember John, the disciple Jesus loved."

"Oh, yes," in a contented, purring voice, for the young, warm hands rubbing her feet gave her a sense of comfort all through her worn-out body.

"He was on an island, on the Lord's day, and he had a vision of Heaven, and he saw a beautiful thing: the prayers of all saints offered with incense; they were offered on a golden altar before God's throne. Think of your prayers being there."

"I don't know how to say much."

"You can say 'Our Father, bless Mary Jane and give her thy Holy Spirit, for Jesus sake.'"

"Oh, yes ; I can say that. I can say that about every one of them, and pa, too. I shan't forget pa."

"That's the best gift God gives."

The old lips muttered sleepily ; as she dozed, Olive sitting at her feet, heard the whispered prayer for " Dianth."

There were glad tears in Olive's eyes ; as long as God taught her, she could teach somebody.

They were sitting at the bedroom window ; it was a breathless afternoon, not a leaf stirred in the orchard ; with a tattered palm-leaf fan Olive fanned her as she slept.

"I wonder if my mother ever prayed for me," she sighed over the old days. "Poor mother !"

After a lifetime of worry and work, this old life was going out in peace ; there was something sweet in the sleeping face ; something so sweet that Olive thought she might have been like Mollie sixty years ago.

Death was the open door through which this soul would escape from the prison of the flesh ; the open door—with youth and an endless new life on the other side of it ; like this narrow window opening into all the sweetness of the summer ; who could be afraid ?

Driving home from church this morning Andrew said he was afraid to die ; he had said it with a shiver.

"Are you afraid to live again ?" she asked.

"No one would be afraid if that life were already begun," he said.

He was in her hammock this afternoon with a book ; in a camp-chair, Leila was sitting near him, writing to her father. She was a good reporter ; she was reporting the morning's sermon. Mrs. Agnew had taken Con down to the brook, each had a Bible ; Con asked Miss Vanema what to read and Olive advised the beautiful story of Ruth.

"We'll each read a verse aloud," said Con. "I like that because it's about in the country."

As Olive sat drawing on the coarse stockings Hannah knitted for her mother in the winter evenings, Diantha's little trot sounded on the bare kitchen floor.

"Of all things !" she exclaimed, looking in at the door. "You sitting here with ma ! In this close, hot room ! You must like old folks. Mother is so hard to get along with. She can knit counterpanes—small squares, you know—and

we girls put them together, but she *has* knit seven, and they *are* so heavy to wash, and we've got more than we can use, so I told Lucy Ann we wouldn't buy her any more stuff and that would put an end to it."



XV.

A FULL WORLD.

"The rays of happiness, like those of light, are colorless when unbroken."

THE second week of August found Leila still at Diantha's; an accumulation of work delayed her father and she persistently refused to go to the seaside without him. Andrew took long tramps and longer drives about the country, and picked up a book whenever he saw one that his cousin and Olive were interested in. Leila told him she still had hope of his mental development, much more than she had of Miss Olive's, for she seemed to eschew all sorts of literature and was determined to betake herself to the womanish occupation of making things for Miss Hannah and little Con Agnew. The Agnews stayed on, to everybody's surprise, and to their own; their three weeks ran into five, and then they had to go; Miss Peters wrote to Mrs.

Agnew that her friend was very sorry that she could not keep her longer in the country, but hoped strongly to send her and Con another summer.

Miss Hannah mourned over the letter and told Mrs. Agnew if "the girls" were willing she would keep her another five weeks, board or no board; but she had to do as every body said, and she wouldn't ever forget the good time she had had.

The afternoon Hiram drove them to the station, she went up to Olive's room to tell her again how rosy Con's cheeks were, and how much better her cough was, and how Mrs. Agnew, poor thing, said she hadn't slept such sleeps since she was a child. And she had gone home ten years younger.

"And I've learned something, Miss Vanema," continued Miss Hannah, standing with her fingers on the door-latch; "I've learned to be content with my own home and people. Her life is such a story of hardship! She did me good in other ways too. I'd like to know who the friend is that paid her board and tell *her* that she had done something for poor old hard-hearted me as well."

That afternoon Leila said to Olive, as she watched her fingers at work on something she was "making over," for Con, to be sent to her in a box

with several other things, "You do so much for people, I should think you would expect something from them."

"I do ; I expect them to be glad."

In these days Olive took life with such good cheer that good cheer came with it.

"When I was a little girl," said Leila, "I found a little bit of a love story in a most unexpected place."

"It was not anywhere on this earth then," Andrew remarked, "or you were too little to expect it."

"It was in *Pilgrim's Progress*," she continued, after a severe glance at him, "and the story of Mercy. Some man, not a Pilgrim, I am certain, found her very attractive until he learned that the needle in her hand was always sewing for poor people, and then he decided that she would not be a good wife for him ; she was too extravagant. That little bit of human nature, Mercy having some one to admire her, made the book very real to me, and impressed the more serious parts. I was about ten ; but I appreciated it. I think afterward she married Christian's oldest son, Matthew, or he may not have been the oldest. I think I intended a

moral when I began my tale ; please find it, visible, although not appended."

"I take it to heart," commented Andrew, "and shall immediately follow that worldly man's example and take myself off."

"Olive, what do you find?" asked Leila. She was on the grass at Olive's feet.

Olive was in her camp-chair on the door-stone, it was pleasant to come back to it again ; she persuaded herself that she was taking up the thread of her life, with the thread that Allan Menzies had woven in, out of sight, or so twisted in that only a darker or brighter effect was visible, with the cause of it concealed. To herself the effect was not brighter ; she had again lost something she never had.

"Only that touch of nature that makes us all kin," said Olive, replying to Leila's question.

"To go on a pilgrimage isn't the easiest thing!" said Leila, who found living according to New Testament rules very much against her inclinations.

"I have always had a fondness for Mercy. I am glad it was in old John to put her in his book. I'm afraid that's a forgotten classic among children ;

I never see children reading it as I used to. But children's literature abounds nowadays," said Olive, out of her middle-aged experience.

"And I read everything; I do not believe there's a book in papa's big library that I hadn't peeped into and got something out of before I was fifteen."

"I was remembering to-day something about Lady Mary Wortley Montagu," answered Olive, who loved to talk about the people she knew through books to this book-worm at her feet. "She regretted to her latest hour not being able to find *The History of Hiempsal*, King of Numidia, the most beautiful of all the books she ever read."

"Probably it was a childish recollection, like mine of Mercy; I don't want to read it to-day for fear I should have no imagination to glorify it. Then I saw beautiful Mercy and her coarse work, and the scornful, worldly lover, and the matron Christiana comforting her, and young Matthew stepping in. O, Olive, I don't want to lose by growing up."

"Never fear, you won't get up very far," comforted her cousin, who had not yet taken himself off. "Mollie," raising his voice, "are you ready?"

"In a minute," answered Diantha, coming to the door, with her quick little step, "she *would* trim her hat over, and now she's late."

"Oh, no; I can wait all day," said Andrew, philosophically, "a drive of ten miles doesn't take much time."

At that moment Leila lifted her eyes; down the road was a figure she recognized. Would the color flush into the face above her, she wondered? Would it be kind to give her warning?

"If you could choose—among everybody you ever saw—whom would you choose to see to-day?" Leila inquired, her voice nervous in spite of her effort to speak naturally, "Don't stop to think! Be impulsive for once."

"And tell the truth," added Andrew.

"Whom would you?" Olive asked, intent on her work.

"My papa!" returned Leila. "But here comes somebody we all want to see! Cousin Di, look down the road."

Cousin Di looked and gave a shout of welcome.

"Well, I should as soon have thought! But I'm real glad! I don't see what brings him, though. I'm glad I have molasses cake in the house."

Olive had learned self-control ; but her lips grew painfully white ; she could not speed away and hide, as she had a childish impulse to do ; she must rise and shake hands and speak. This was in her day. It had been in it as long as God knew it would be. But it could not hurt her, even if it had to be hard. She did not think this now ; she did not think anything ; she felt how white and stiff her lips were. Andrew was calling Mollie again, Diantha hurried out to the gate, and, by some mishap Leila pricked Olive's fingers in taking her work from her ; the color rushed to the whitened lips, and it was only her self-possessed self that shook hands with Allan Menzies, and her frank greeting was very easy.

"It must be right for me to be here," she reasoned within herself in her chamber that night ; "but I must go soon where he will not come. Dr. Clymer says another month of being out at pasture will make me ready for my usual work."

To-night life seemed to her only one long working-day. She would be glad when night came and she might go to sleep.

Diantha followed her out into the entry the next morning to say something in a confidential whis-

per ; following people around to whisper something was one of her peculiarities.

"I don't like to ask Miss Leila, because it might seem like sending her off, but I have an offer of a mother and two children for a month, and her chamber is the only one I have for them : do you know how soon she is going ?"

"No," said Olive, "but that need not hinder you ; Leila will be glad to share my chamber : every time she goes into it, she wishes she could stay there."

"Ah, that will do then ! From something I overheard this morning—she was talking to Menzies—I didn't know, he may stay and finish his writing, and then I suppose she would want to stay and help him."

Diantha's tone was very significant.

"You can easily learn what you wish to by speaking to her," returned Olive, in her distant manner, and Diantha found Mollie to tell her that Miss Vanema was growing more unapproachable every day, and she understood her no better than the day she came, which was saying a great deal.

While Olive stood on the door-stone debating how to spend her morning, Menzies appeared,

coming up the lane with Leila ; they were walking slowly, and his head was bent listening to her. "Olive," called Andrew from the piazza, "come and take a walk. The day was made to be out in. To-morrow it will rain ; I feel it in my bones."

As Leila lifted her face, Olive thought she needed only an undefined something to give her beauty—a something she had this very minute, a flush rounded her cheeks and feeling kindled her pale gray eyes into darkness and brightness.

"Well," she assented, in response to Andrew's call. He came around to her and insisted that she should put on her hat. "We may go around the world."

"Which way ?" inquired Menzies.

"Nowhere in particular," said Andrew. "We are going somewhere to find a place to go."

"Then Miss Vanema will not go with you ; she always knows where she is going."

"I know now ; deep in the shade down by the brook. I can take my work, and somebody can take a book—"

"Somebody isn't invited," growled Andrew.

"And somebody can take a lunch!" planned

Leila. "Oh, do wait till I call Mollie. Let's all go."

The book and the brook, the shady place, the lunch and the people, were gathered together and all harmonious, as Leila knew they would be as soon as her cousin recovered his good-humor: the gentlemen carried shawls and lunch baskets and the girls had their work; it was to be a day out of doors. Mollie was radiant: her summer was all good times.

"I wish Miss Hannah were here," said Olive, as she dropped her bundle of work on the shawl spread out between the trees. "I want her to have one *young* time before we go home; it would give her a lift, and that is all she needs."

"As we didn't have that ride!" assented Leila, "I'll run back and get her; it will not take five minutes."

"Let me go," proposed Mollie. "I can help her get ready and make Aunt Maria and Aunt Mary Jane and Aunt Sarah Lib willing to let her come. Grandma will be willing. They have to hold a woman's convention over every new thing, and it takes the longest time. But I'll hurry it through."

"My services would be of no avail, then," remarked Andrew. "I was about to immolate myself."

"I will go with you," said Menzies, depositing his lunch basket at the foot of a tree. "I know your mother is running down the lane with something we have forgotten, and I can relieve her anxiety!"

Mollie scampered off, and Menzies followed slowly; then she turned and waited for him. Olive saw her take hold of his hand as they went on together.

"Has Miss Vanema been happy, Mollie?"

"Yes, I think so. She is always so bright. Have you been happy, Menzies?"

"If going straight ahead makes people happy, then I should be. We have been making changes. We had a plain talk and I was spokesman.

"Each said what he and she had to say and each had a different plan. It was Jane that began it. She came home from Dazey full of it. She had been with Aunt Betsey, and some kind of a revolution has taken place inside her little head and taken her heart by storm. Perhaps it was Aunt Betsey's old-fashioned home and old-fashioned life. The

night of her return she came to me, and stood behind me, and put her arms about my neck as I sat reading and told me I was a good brother. We are not demonstrative as a family; I think we lose something—I think Amzi misses something; we repress and depress him. I never saw my father kiss one of his daughters."

"Perhaps fathers don't," said Mollie, thinking of her own father; "not after they are grown up."

"I was surprised at Jane."

He lingered over it as though he loved to talk about it.

"I did not know she thought I was a good brother; I do not feel that I had been. What do you think she asked me, Mollie?"

"I can't imagine," said Mollie.

"Something I had not dared ask myself. She said: 'Allan, do you know the woman you wish to marry?' I dared not answer. My life had been so shut up—she knew about Virginia. I said: 'I do not know any woman who is willing to marry me.' But she would not be satisfied, she repeated her question. I said: 'Yes, Jane, I do; but I have given it up. Marriage is a luxury that I shall never be able to afford; talk no more about

it.' And then she cried, dear little Jane, with her head on the back of my chair. And then she talked; everything pent up for years seemed to pour itself out. The gist of it was that everybody must take a turn at the mill and help in grinding his own grist. Aunt Betsey wanted her and Amzi. She would take care of the house and Amzi always loved the farm and was always studying agriculture when everybody discouraged him; it was the only thing he really did care for. Father's money must be divided—Amzi is twenty-one—and each one start out with it. Ten thousand dollars into six parts! Not a fortune for any of us, little girl. I believe Aunt Betsey's kind old heart is at the bottom of it. After that we had the family council. Butler is to be married, and Abby is to go with him; she is his favorite sister; she says she can make the interest of her money dress her if Letty will do the making; and Letty will go with me—it all simmered down into that. We talked till after midnight, and then everybody went to bed satisfied. The next morning everybody was glad to see everybody else at breakfast; our house hadn't been so full of happy faces since I can remember; and then it came out that each one was thinking and

contriving, and no one wished to speak first—for it is not a light thing to break up a home,—especially among brothers and sisters who are not young. Father had lived in that house forty-five years. Butler will take the house. He has something laid up; he has never been extravagant; he has not done anything for the house excepting pay his board. My money has slipped through my fingers somehow: I like to see the girls well dressed and pretty things about the house, and I liked father to go to Saratoga every summer; I haven't two hundred dollars ahead."

"But you can write now, can't you?" Mollie inquired, anxiously.

"I can do better. I have another offer, a very good one. Mr. Hazen, of the High School—the Latin teacher has gone off and his position is offered me. Not a large salary, but two or three people can live on it. I've had private pupils all my life. I'm not rusty in teaching. What do you think of all this?"

Mollie thought some very wise thoughts, but she did not speak them. She did not like to ask if the woman he wished to marry were Leila; her

mother said it was Leila. She did not think it was; Leila was a girl like herself.

"Cousin Menzies, thank you for telling me all about it. I like Jane."

"Are you glad for me?" he asked, remembering how she had once been sorry for him.

"I am glad for that—girl."

"She may not be glad for herself. I am a rough, rusty old bachelor," with a regretful sigh.

"Perhaps she likes rough, rusty old fellows like you," laughed Mollie, to whom her cousin had been "old" all her life. "Perhaps she is rough and rusty, too."

"She is gold—refined," he said in a voice harsh with deep feeling.

"Is she a girl?"

"She is a girl to me!" he said, with a smile at the memory of the girl on the woodpile.

"May I tell Leila about Jane and what she said? Mother did not think Jane was like that. You are not rough and rusty to Leila any more than you are to me."

"I told her myself—not half of what I have told you, but that my little sister was a treasure. I was

telling her as we came up the lane and found the beginning of our picnic."

It was an hour before Mollie and Menzies returned with Miss Hannah; she had on her sun-bonnet and clean gingham apron, and in both hands was carrying a juicy pie of harvest apples. She was welcomed with a shout and a clapping of hands and made to sit down on the shawl, next to Olive.

"I brought my knitting; I could not waste too much time. But I shall like to hear you chatter. Maria said it was folly and nonsense, and I told her I liked folly and nonsense then. Mary Jane was taking out her pies and gave me a hot one. She makes the queen of apple pies. And she sent this to Mr. Croft."

Andrew closed his book to look at the apple pie; Miss Hannah had told Olive that he was the first gentleman in the land; he had lifted a heavy cream pail for her, and one night when she had a pain in her side and Sarah Lib was away, he had strained all her milk.

"What is it that ye came to note?
A young man preaching in a boat?"

The words he last read kept themselves in his mind. This Young Man preaching in a boat was more and more getting a hold on his imagination; yesterday for two hours he talked with Leila about the young ruler who went away from Christ sorrowful.

"He says lovely things," Leila sighed to herself, "but he will never do them."

Miss Hannah settled herself back against a tree, and pulled her knitting out of her pocket. It was fun to her, as it was to Mollie, to play that she was a summer boarder; to her the fun of it was that it was make-believe; to Mollie the pleasure was that, for awhile, it seemed real.

"I've learned a new way for girls to earn money," said Leila. "I think I shall make a study of the things working-women can do."

"It's easy enough to make a study of other people's work," asserted Miss Hannah. "I'd like to do it myself."

Leila was not abashed by the laugh; she enjoyed a hit at herself.

"This way is by raising canaries. I should think your sister Jane might like that, Mr. Menzies. Good singers bring good prices, and even the poor ones sell. Does she like canaries?"

"She loves pets of all kinds. That's a suggestion worth thinking of. It will amuse her in the country; I suppose she must learn how."

"That is simple enough," said Leila. "A big cage, a wide, shallow nest, and cleanliness are essential. I believe I would like to try it. There's a great deal of wasted energy in me."

"My sister and youngest brother are going to Dazey, Miss Olive," Menzies remarked, his tone as unconcerned as though it were merely a summer vacation.

"That red house, Olive!" Leila burst in. "I don't see why such things don't happen to me."

"It happened to me once," said Olive.

"Miss Olive, will you go again?" asked Menzies, picking up the dried sticks at his feet. "I bear an invitation for you; a most urgent one."

"She is going to the seaside with Leila," answered Andrew incisively, "and they must be off in a day or two."

"I have not promised," said Olive. "I think I shall not go—that takes money; I do want to go to Dazey, for one day and one night; it would make me a girl again."

"That is not desirable," observed Andrew.
"What do you want to be a girl for?"

"I do not think I do—but I would like to live in that time one day—perhaps to be glad to come back again."

"May I write that you will go?" Menzies persisted, still poking among the dried sticks.

"Is your sister there now?"

"She will be next week; Amzi, too. I want you to see Jane. "She has heard of you—Aunt Betsey talked of you," he added, awkwardly.

"Do go, Olive," persuaded Leila, "go for a week. I knew you wouldn't go with me. I shall have papa and Andrew."

Olive pondered; her work seemed to be taking all her attention. There was nothing in the world she wished so much to do.

"Aunt Betsey said it might be your last opportunity; 'tell her,' she said, 'that I am a very old woman.'"

"Dr. Clymer says I may go back to work." Olive played with her spool. "I am ready for work; I have not quite decided about it. I do not think I shall raise canaries. So many directions are tempting to me. But I will go to Dazey, first. I

will go—why, I might go to-morrow. I would like to stay over Sunday and go to church and Sunday school. My girls are all grown up, and I suppose married—I shouldn't know any of them. This is the loveliest thing that could happen to me, Leila."

"Jane will not be there; Aunt Betsey has a housekeeper; how glad the old soul will be!"

"Understanding everybody's delight, Miss Olive, how is it that you have kept away so long?" Andrew inquired, with a perceptible shade of sarcasm. "Is Dazey down on the map? It must be on the celestial map, I think."

"It is not fifty miles from this spot," said Menzies. "You must take an early train, Miss Olive; it is not the easiest thing to make the connection; you will have to wait two hours—but it is at a country station, and you can take a book and a lunch. You haven't forgotten, have you, where you take the stage?"

"Hasn't anything changed? Can I ride in that same old stage?"

"You will have to ride in a new one, I'm sorry to say, and it is very comfortable. One of your small pupils has grown up and married and taken the stage route; he was in the First Reader then,

and is hardly out of it now. But he can drive horses, if he can't read the newspaper."

"Who is he?"

"Hathaway. That freckled little Sam."

"Barefooted and red-headed! I remember him. He *couldn't* learn to read. I used to keep him after school, and he would cry all over his unlearned lesson; once he tore out the leaf."

"That is where Hiram wants to go," said Mollie. "Will he have to be examined?"

"He can go through with it," Olive answered; "it is nothing dreadful. I remember some of my questions now. I could scarcely sleep the night before, for dread of it: the superintendent took me into somebody's back kitchen, and asked me what a disjunctive conjunction was."

"He couldn't catch you on grammar," said Menzies. "What did he catch you on?"

"Not on the circumference of the earth, or the number of degrees in a circle, or who discovered America, or where Napoleon died," Olive stopped to laugh.

"See that squirrel!" exclaimed Andrew. "It is actually sitting up with a nut in its fore-paws."

How the day went after that Olive hardly knew.

There was reading aloud, and strolls by twos and threes, and two delicious lunches, and singing and merry talk and laughter, and then in the late afternoon the walk home up the lane; Andrew carried her shawl and Menzies took Leila's from her and threw it over his arm; she walked home with Miss Hannah; Miss Hannah said she would never forget what a good time she had had.

"I can't bear to have you go," said Miss Hannah, after the milking was done and she went up to Olive's room for a final talk. "Do you think you will come back?"

"Miss Hannah, to be frank, I cannot afford to travel about; of course I shall not think of the Dazey school; I want Hiram to have that. Mr. Menzies says some one asked him if he could get a teacher, and he told them of Hiram. But I am thinking of Miss Peters' school; I am very much drawn to that. Last week she wrote to me again, urging me to come. And you know I am thinking of the poor mothers and children in New York city; but Dr. Clymer warned me about doing that. He says I am not as strong as I look and feel."

"You are a beautiful picture of health," Hannah

exclaimed, in frankest admiration. "Your cheeks are like ripe peaches."

"Yes, I am strong" said Olive, in the voice of one not thinking of what she was saying.

There was a look of preparation for a journey about the room; the lid of her trunk was lifted, small boxes were uncovered, a dress was thrown over a chair and she was standing with her hands heaped with small things.

"It looks like going," said Hannah. "I like to see things look as if something was going to happen."

Olive stood still, undecided; if she did not return, and that might not be best, would she not be glad of another week at Diantha's?

But then Jane Menzies would be at Dazey! What reason in the world was there for Jane Menzies not being at Dazey when she was there?

"Miss Hannah, I'm a goose—a silly goose. I don't know what I want to do."

"I don't believe you want to go."

"I don't believe I will decide to go—yet. I can pack at midnight, if need be. I know you came for something."

Miss Hannah sat down on the side of the bed.

"I don't know what it is; I want you to help me a little more before you go; I thought perhaps you could tell me something else?"

The patient, pathetic voice, the cry for help, the determination to do the best she could, touched Olive anew; the hard hands, the rough shoes, the careless hair, told their own story; but it was a very sweet story to this woman who had learned to understand the depth of a life that seemed shallow.

"A word out of your book, perhaps; I don't seem to know how to find what I want. I guess the Lord tells you."

"He does," said Olive, dropping her handful into the tray of her trunk.

She lighted her lamp, and with her "book" in her hand drew her chair to the woman sitting on the side of the bed.

"I wish you would tell me how to read the Bible."

Leila's question over again: how to read the Bible.

"I do not think I read it; I *live* it. I absorb it, it grows into me; it is true things, real happenings; it is God Himself, what He thinks and does for everybody—it is not yesterday, it is to-day—it is

God, and it is *me*. I look into His face, I see Him and hear Him speak. That is not reading; it is *having*. I cannot tell you how to read the Bible. I do not read it. These pages and letters are only outside things; I do not see them. When that woman touched the hem of Christ's garment, she did not think of what she held in her hand, the material of Christ's garment, she thought of Him and held on to Him; she could not have told you whether it was silk or wool; she knew she had hold of Christ. When you go by yourself and sit down with His book in your hand, you are like that woman; His book is His garment, He is within it, it is wrapping Him round; He gives Himself to you. You cry out to Him and He answers; He speaks, these words are what He speaks to you. Himself teaches you what He means; Himself, the Holy Spirit."

"I have read it through twice; I never go to bed, achey and tired as I am, without reading my chapter. I am in Joshua, now; to-night I shall read the third chapter. It's a pretty story."

"Miss Hannah, it is God and you."

Miss Hannah's eyes widened; she looked nervous.

"God has been getting you ready all day to be with Him to-night. He has something to say to you. He makes our lives to fit His word. Every time you come to Him to listen to His word, ask Him to talk to you; pray, 'Give me thy Holy Spirit to make me understand.'"

"I will," promised Hannah under her breath.

Olive found Hannah's "chapter," and read it aloud in her clear, impressive voice.

"These things happened to these people to tell them something new and true about God. Every new thing was a good thing. He gave them the ark to go before them through Jordan with very plain directions; 'that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore.' Every day is a new way to us; we have never lived through to-morrow; He wishes us to *know* how to go; not to guess, and try experiments, but to be sure. I do not *know* what to do to-morrow; you see I am undecided; I don't know what is wise. But He wants me to know. He wants you to know. How could we know, never having passed this way before? Joshua said to the people, 'Sanctify yourselves.' Make yourselves holy."

"We *can't* do that," said Hannah, "I've tried, and I always get worse and make things worse for other folks."

"If we can't, then we don't have to. If God has given us a command impossible to be obeyed—"

"Oh, He hasn't! I didn't mean that; I wouldn't dare say that," cried Hannah, rubbing her thin fingers over each other.

"I will find what Jesus said about that very word, *Sanctify*."

She turned the leaves, the eager eyes watching.

"Jesus was praying to His Father, praying for all His disciples, all who should ever believe; for you and me, Hannah and Olive, as truly as for Peter and John. He prayed: Sanctify them—sanctify Hannah, sanctify Olive—He knew all about us—Sanctify them *through thy truth*. Make them holy through thy truth. What is His truth?"

"His word," said Hannah.

"He tells His Father exactly that: *thy word is truth*. These words in Joshua are His truth. You say you cannot sanctify yourself. Christ knew you couldn't when He asked his Father to do it for you, *in you*. Joshua told the people that after they were sanctified the Lord would do wonders for them.

After the Father sanctifies you and me, He will do wonders for us. Let us pray for ourselves as Christ prayed for us: Sanctify me through thy truth, thy word is truth. And He will. Every time you think of His truth, read His truth, obey His truth, He will be making you holy with it. That is the way to read the Bible."

"Yes," said Hannah, so impressed that words did not come readily, "but tell me something else. If I had read that I shouldn't have known, or remembered, that Christ prayed about that. How can I find all the other things?"

"I am so glad you asked me that. That is a help you must have! Have you a Concordance?"

"No; I haven't. Dianth has. She teaches in Sunday school, and so she bought a little one and paid fifty cents for it."

"That is better than none. But you must have a larger one. I will show you mine."

The Concordance was on the table; Olive found the word "Sanctify," and showed her how to find it in the references.

"Look in this way for any word that strikes you; there's always something more about every thing you wish to learn. 'Sanctify' is enough for

us to-night. That is enough to feed us a long while. When you are hungry look for something else. Don't cram ! Don't look for ever so many things in one day. Think about Christ's prayer for you and pray it until you are ready for another truth. Don't try to read a whole chapter at a time, unless you are ready for it. Get so full with one thought that you cannot think of anything else. Then how you will *grow*."

"I *am* growing," said Hannah, in confidence and simplicity.

"I will write the name of the book for you, and the bookseller in Monroe will get it for you."

"How much will it cost ?"

"This will cost more than fifty cents. One dollar, and perhaps a little more."

"That is a good deal to pay for a book, but I'd give twice as much."

Had not Olive remembered the milking and churning it would take to make the pounds of butter required to buy the book, she would have been indignant; six pounds, perhaps; and then it was only a book !

"It is more than a book to you ; it is a part of the answer to Christ's prayer for you."

"And my butter helps to get it," cried Hannah, in unspeakable delight. "To think of my butter doing that. I should think He *would* care for churning and milking."

Olive smiled; Hannah had given her a thought; when she told the dairy-woman that the Lord cared for the work of her hands, she did not think of anything as practical as this.

"Now I've got it," said Hannah, rising, "and I'm going. Dianth was afraid you might teach something dangerous when I told her you talked the Bible to me. I don't know what she will think of my spending so much for a Concordance!"

"You haven't any daughter to buy pretty things for."

"I wouldn't do all she does for Mollie, and make her giddy and vain," said Hannah, thinking of the summer silk Diantha had promised Mollie. "Dianth has a long head, but she outwits herself sometimes; do *you* think Mr. Croft cares much for Mollie?"

Olive was startled; she kept back the words on her lips.

"Dianth does," Hannah's voice sank to a whisper. "She's counting on it. She says Mollie is lady enough to be a rich man's wife."

"The dear child! The dear, simple, beautiful child! Does her mother put such thoughts into her head?"

How simple and unseeing she had been herself!

"You know he takes her riding," said Hannah, with a convincing air.

"When Leila won't go."

"He has taken her alone four times; Dianth told me."

"Yes—I think he has, perhaps. But she had shopping to do, and the horses were busy. He likes to take somebody every day with his horses."

"He hires the horses, doesn't he?"

"Yes, they belong to a man in Monroe."

"Such a pretty carriage! I should think Mollie would like to go. Nobody ever paid me such attention when I was a girl," said Mollie's aunt, with jealous regret.

"It is something not to be desired, Miss Hannah, if it is to be so seriously misunderstood. I am sorry her mother encourages it. I know Mr. Croft. He is amused with Mollie; she is as sweet as a wild rose to him, but when he goes back to the city he will not care for wild roses. They belong to the country. I am so sorry, so very sorry!"

"So am I," said Hannah penitently, "if *you* are. I thought you would know. I can tell Mollie ; she likes me best of her aunts. She will listen to me. She will not build any hopes. But she doesn't see through Dianth !"

Olive gave a little sigh when she was alone.

This little world at Diantha's, how full it was—of other people. Sometimes she felt as if it were full of herself. There was enough in herself to-night to fill it full.

Allan and Leila started out to walk to the mail immediately after supper ; Leila expected a letter from her father ; Allan asked her to go with him to get it ; as they went out the gate she came down the lane to go up to her room to pack for to-morrow's journey.

Allan had told her that this girl with her musical voice and alert mind was very interesting to him ; as Olive dropped the lid of her trunk, she thought perhaps the interest might continue all his life. This was not a thing belonging only to the country.

It was queer, but she had not outgrown. Would she grow old and outgrow ? Did she wish she might ?

She was glad she had all those girls at the Sem-

inary to think of; it would not do to outgrow girls; and yet, not outgrowing them, she was a kind of a girl herself, and that was hard, in middle-age, when such things were supposed to have passed out of her life. She did not specify what things. A peach was not a wild rose; but the peach was the fruit.

"Olive! Olive!" cried Leila's voice on the stairs, "do open the door and let me in! Papa is coming."

Olive opened the door and came out on the landing.

"Papa will be here some time to-morrow. You cannot run away, now he is coming. What would he think? Now you cannot go till next week. I'm crazy about papa! I haven't seen him for weeks! You *will* not go."

In an instant Olive decided not to go. How could she go when Dr. Provost had been her best friend ever since she began to need a friend?

"I certainly will not go."

"I told Mr. Menzies you would not. I don't see why he should care so much, anyway. It's only his old aunt, and she can wait. People over ninety have learned to wait."

"What a comfort it will be when you are ninety."

"People so old can't care; it's lived and suffered out of them. I wanted you to go for your sake, not for hers."

Then life had not been "lived and suffered" out of her in the thought of this girl of twenty-one.

"I'm so glad papa's letter came in time. There's a message for you. He never forgets you. I tell him that you are his oldest daughter."

To stay then must be God's best way for her, or He would have done some better thing for her. How much of her life was in her own hands was always a perplexing question. But the perplexity was solved when she remembered it was in her own hands to put into God's hands.

Leila flitted off to find Mollie, and Olive went slowly down through the house and out into the apple orchard. The old mother was fanning herself at a bedroom window down-stairs and complaining of the heat; the old father was walking restlessly about the back yard; Sarah Lib in a stiffly starched muslin was entertaining loud-voiced friends in the parlor; Maria was "setting the sponge" for her bread at the kitchen table; Mary

Jane, darning stockings, was at the same table, working by the dim light of the one small kerosene lamp; Hannah had gone down to the cow-yard to take a pail of warm feed to an ailing cow.

The new moon trembled in the west near its setting; Olive thought it was the prettiest new moon she ever saw; the fireflies glinted through the orchard; the birds had twittered and gone to rest; a katydid sounded in the locust-trees across the road, the air was still and cool, the retirement and motion of the hammock were inviting; she nestled herself into it and let it swing.

Something she had learned one night when she was too weary to sleep repeated itself to her as the hammock, like a cradle, swung to and fro:

“ Like a cradle, rocking, rocking,
Silent, peaceful, to and fro—
Like a mother's sweet looks dropping
On the little face below—
Hangs the green earth, swinging, turning,
Jarless, noiseless, safe and slow,
Falls the light of God's face, bending
Down and watching us below.
And as feeble babes that suffer,
Toss and cry and will not rest,
Are the ones the tender mother
Holds the closest, loves the best—

So, when we are weak and wretched,
By our sins weighed down, distressed,
Then it is that God's great patience,
Holds us closest, loves us best."

The step in the lane hesitated, then it came on over the grass and through the orchard straight to the swinging hammock.

"Miss Olive, may I come?"

"May you stay, you mean?" she said with a laugh that trembled a little, like her voice.

Allan Menzies leaned against the tree at the foot of the hammock and stayed its motion with his hand.

"It's a glorious night."

"Yes," was all she said.

"You will not go to-morrow, then."

"No."

"This is a new summer to me. I have not told any one about it—excepting my pastor."

And then he told her about that night as he lay on his bed reading and the pressure he was under, the mighty pressure that would have its way.

"I did not believe in Christ in any sure way. I was compelled to believe; I could not resist; I had

no desire to resist. It was the sweetest, most forceful influence. Olive, it was the Holy Spirit.'

"Yes," was all she could say, and then, "you know how very glad I am; I never was so glad about anything before."

"I knew you would be."

He stood a moment, then moved away. The new moon hung low in the west, the fireflies darted hither and thither.

Olive stayed in the hammock until the light in the kitchen window disappeared, and then she knew it was late and she must go in.

XVI.

THAT LAST DAY.

"Many things, having full reference
To one consent, may work contrariouly:
As many arrows, loosed several ways,
Fly to one mark; as many ways meet
in one town.

—SHAKESPEARE.

"AND his daughter is such a plain little piece," answered Diantha, as if she could not understand how it happened.

Lucy Ann opened the conversation by remarking that Dr. Provost was handsome enough to be a soldier, she did not know that ministers ever *were* so handsome.

"Ever allowed themselves to be," said Mensies, who was standing in the kitchen doorway. "I suppose the General Assembly doesn't like to speak to him about it."

"Menzies, you know Leila is ugly," contended Diantha.

"I know she is one of the most attractive bits of human nature I ever saw," he replied composedly.

Diantha had been wishing that somebody would say something provoking, that she might have an excuse for being cross.

Dr. Provost had been there a week, and now he was going away and would take Leila with him; that lady with children had written to say she had found board elsewhere; Miss Vanema was going for good, and Menzies had said he must be off the same day; she had hoped, with no encouragement from anybody, that Andrew Croft would stay and finish the summer, and perhaps all the fall; he had been in such raptures over everything, and he could have Leila's chamber, and in that case, she could ask two dollars extra for board.

Now her house would be empty, and the butcher's bill not paid, and Lucy Ann to have her three dollars a week; it was too provoking, and somebody ought to behave and make things different. Mollie had her summer silk in the house all ready to be made up, but what would it amount if nobody

stayed! And there was Hiram giving notice, after all these ten years, when everybody took it for granted he would stay all his natural life; even if no bargain had ever been made, it was honorable for him to stay after being treated like one of the family. A school-teacher! He was about as capable of teaching as David's yoke of oxen.

"*You did that!*" exclaimed Diantha, speaking out of the irritation of the moment and following her own thoughts. "You got Hiram Anderson away."

"He got himself away by having brains!"

"And Miss Vanema! I just heard about it. To think of anything going on in my house and I not knowing it! She has been teaching that boy nights for a month; Arithmetic, teaching him how to teach children, and Grammar, and Geography. Every night, except Sundays, over there at mother's! They got an hour at it whenever they could! And sometimes it was in the noon spell! She's an underhanded woman, and I'm glad she's going away. And if it hadn't been for her meddling, Mollie might—Mr. Croft took a fancy to her from the very first, and I got it out of Hannah that *she* didn't like it! What is she to him? She's *nothing*

but a poor school-teacher. She's capable of setting him against Mollie—artful thing!—with her pretty step and white hair and face as innocent as a baby's. There's something unexplained about her, I shall always believe. I'd like to know whose money she is living on. She never went to church until Mr. Croft came and hired horses and asked David to board them—and David ought to give me that money; he wouldn't have had the horses but for the man; and he took his cousin and her to church. I suppose our big wagon wasn't style enough for a broken-down school-teacher. I never shall believe she is orthodox, for all her having the Bible around in places where a nice Bible shouldn't be! On her bed, and on a chair, and in her hammock and even on the grass, and I saw it once on a seat down by the brook. I call that ostentatious piety, and I hope to be delivered from it. I am willing to eat my head if she didn't meddle about Mollie and Mr. Croft. I *know* she spoke to him. He's had a way of following her about like everybody else; I hope you'll be warned, and not play with fire, Cousin Menzies. I've noticed you do leave her judiciously alone. It's a wonder, for she showed as plain as print how glad she was to see you that

morning she came in from walking and saw you at the breakfast table."

"Dianthy," said Lucy Ann in the first pause, "if you expect to have them biscuit ready for breakfast it is time they was in the oven."

Menzies listened in serene silence; when the torrent of words ceased for the space of a breath, he turned and went into the sitting-room and shut the door.

Mollie was setting the long breakfast table, her eyelids were reddened and her cheeks flushed and wet.

"Never mind, little girl," said Menzies, touching her hair as he passed her.

"I don't like mother—to be like that," she sobbed. "I am glad about everything—I want Hiram to go, and Mr. Croft was very kind to me; he gave me a ten dollar gold piece yesterday because I had waited on him like a little maid, he said, and I couldn't think nonsense—when Hiram talked to me about it and didn't want me to—and I've had the best time I ever had and mother is spoiling it all. I wish mothers never spoiled things, don't you?"

"I know a daughter who sweetens things."

"She says Hiram shan't write to me, if he goes away, and father says he shall."

The kitchen door was opened by a quick hand, and Diantha's heated face looked in.

"Mollie, child, hurry; my biscuits is in the oven."

Mollie started, and dropped her pile of clean napkins on the table. Menzies did not appear at the breakfast table; Diantha was disturbed and flurried, spoke sharply to Mollie, found fault with her husband, pushed over a pitcher of cream and informed the table that she didn't think she would ever take boarders again. You didn't know who you took into your house—men would flirt and women would be underhanded, and no money would pay for the wear and tear of the nerves.

"That is true, Mrs. Van Der Zee," courteously replied Dr. Provost. "My daughter and Miss Vanema have had a most delightful summer, and Mr. Croft thinks your place the prettiest within a mile; I know they are eager to come again—if your nerves will bear the strain."

"My wife is all nerves," remarked the head of the house, in a conciliatory manner, "she is as high strung as an Arab horse, a pretty high stepper,

but she will run her feet off for you just the same, and work her fingers to the bone."

Andrew lingered after the others had left the room, and as Diantha sat sipping her late cup of hot coffee he stepped behind her chair and dropped two ten dollar gold pieces into her cup.

"I knew it wasn't sweet enough," he said in the winning way in which he spoke to all women; "it is too bad for us all to desert you; that is for the little lunches you have prepared for my tramps and drives."

"Oh, that wasn't anything," she said, gratified and surprised.

"It was a good deal to a hungry man; I never like lunches I find at country bakeries."

"I'm sure I thank you, and I didn't expect anything, Mr. Croft."

She hid the gold pieces in her top drawer and did not speak of them, not even to her husband; she persuaded Lucy Ann to take two dollars and a half a week, instead of the three she promised, and then told her she must throw in two days of house-cleaning; for if it hadn't been for her she wouldn't have had the money at all.

Every day of this last week was full to Olive.

Dr. Provost claimed her and Leila every morning for a walk, Andrew grumbled openly, and Menzies strolled off by himself with a book. Every afternoon had a way of its own, and in the evening they sat on the piazza and talked and sang; Menzies was always one of them, and Leila was never content without Mollie.

The last day, the day of Diantha's nervous outburst, was the rarest day of all the summer,—cool and bright, with every breath laden with sweet odors. Leila sighed with happiness; to have the country and papa was to her a foretaste of having the heavenly country and her Father in Heaven.

Mollie moved about with slower steps than usual, a shadow over the day that shadowed her life; she was so ashamed of her mother!

Her mother, carrying her small head loftily, was in and out among them, speaking her hasty words hastily and doing little kindnesses for everybody in the house. Maria was called over the back yard fence to come and help with the dinner, for *that* day was to be the success of the season. Scolding and laughing, Diantha edged her way in everywhere and put finishing touches to the work of her sisters; her husband boasted that she could do as much

work in five hours as her five sisters could do in that time, and then it turned out better.

Andrew's plan was a drive with lunch at a clearing up a mountain ten miles distant, where the view extended endlessly; but nobody wanted a drive or an endless view, everybody wanted to stay at home.

There was the lane, the orchard, the brook, the doorstone that was one of Olive's milestones, the piazza, the rustic seats under the horse-chestnuts—why, there was everything to be visited and enjoyed for the last time. And papa had not seen half, Leila said. And Olive must be gotten away and know about his plans, Allan Menzies said to himself. And she must be alone awhile in her dear upper chamber, Olive thought. And he must have a talk with Olive, Dr. Provost decided.

While Andrew frowned and pulled the ends of his moustache and wished other people would go off to the orchards and brooks and leave Olive alone, for he had something to say to her ladyship that she should be compelled to hear.

Not once had she taken a drive with him alone, not once since that first morning had he had her

companionship all to himself one whole hour. He had a right to lose his temper.

And Hannah was glad they did not go on the drive, for she could see Miss Vanema in her hammock, or going in and out, and have a bright word from her. No one spoke such bright words as Miss Vanema. And Hiram had not looked with favor on the drive, because, perhaps, Miss Vanema would remember him this last day and give him one more lesson in teaching grammar.

Diantha hoped something from this drive: Mollie was to look her prettiest, and her prettiest in her mother's eyes was something to look, especially in contrast to Leila's ugly, pale, sallow, thin little face—and it might be this last straw would break Mr. Croft's heart and show him that he couldn't do better than take a wife who would be young when he was old and growing more a lady with every advantage. But the drive was voted down, and the simple worldly mother had to content herself with bidding Mollie keep out of the kitchen and take the day to herself.

"There will be canning and house-cleaning enough for one while after they are gone, child," she said, giving her a push away from the kitchen

table with her elbow ; " take a vacation when you can."

After Andrew's drive had been set aside,—the council was held on the piazza immediately after breakfast,—Dr. Provost laid his hand on Olive's shoulder :

" Olive, my dear, come and take a walk with me."

It was the tone in which he would have spoken to his daughter ; " Olive, my dear" and " Leila, my dear," were set to the same music. Andrew grumbled to Leila who stood near him.

" Oh, thank you," said Olive, " I have been hoping you would ask me."

" Do you suppose she is hoping that about me ?" Andrew grumbled again to Leila.

The walk was not far ; it ended in a shady place half way down the lane, where the twisted roots of a hickory-tree formed a comfortable seat for two.

" You know I've had oversight of you for so long that I feel as if you belong to me—I remember the first day I saw you, a girl of ten, making toast for supper ; I called to see your father, I was a young fellow then, you had the busy, absorbed air of a small housekeeper ; your mother was in an easy

chair, and she fretted at you for burning the toast ; I was sorry for you, and then your father turned and said some sharp words."

Olive did not remember ; housekeeping and fault-finding were among her earliest remembrances. "Your uncle thought more of you than he appeared to ; he could do nothing for you without encouraging your father. But all that time is over ; your sunshine has come, you have no right to have a care in the world, have you ? "

"Not of my own," returned Olive, smiling. "I am so cared for that I have no right to."

"What do you propose doing next ? "

"If you knew all I have thought of ! Even getting my goods and chattels together and keeping house. I long for a *home*. I want to make a home ; I want to feel that it is my very own ; but it would be such a poor little one with only three hundred a year to support it. I cannot live alone and my income would not support two. I would like my own fireside and my own table ! two rooms would be scarcely enough ; I want them in the city in winter."

"You are too ambitious."

"Too ambitious for my purse. I wish I could

work—and not for money ; I have had to think of money. I wish I could think of service apart from wages. It used to trouble that pay day meant so much to me. I could not think that working days were enough. And now when I am having such a rest as I am having now, and doing only what I will to do, and having nothing hard from morning until night I enjoy it so, and wish the winter could be like the summer. I have even envied Leila because she had not to spur herself into work, but could take the day as it came. I have envied women with husbands and girls with fathers. I haven't been very good."

"I'm afraid you haven't," he said smiling.

"The thing about it that hurts me is that the Lord has to whip me into His service. He couldn't trust me with six hundred a year ; He knows I would be idle. Now if I do anything beside eat and drink and wear the plainest clothing, I must work for it. Sometimes I am all on fire to work for the poor, and then I think of all I want for myself and resolve to go to money-making again.

Money is a necessity, and I work harder because of wages ; I *ought* to work harder because I am in God's Kingdom. But I think of the wages and

forget His work ; I think of what I can do with money for myself. That home of my own draws me as it can only draw a woman with domestic tastes."

"You might take a boarder," was the serious suggestion.

"But I couldn't choose my boarder ; I couldn't find exactly the one I want ; some one to harmonize. I read about some women yesterday, and it stirred me all up ; it showed me my selfishness. Outside the walls of Jerusalem is a lepers' hospital, tended by deaconesses from the German religious houses ; they care for the lepers while themselves literally dying by inches. Isn't that what the Lord would have them do ? So near where He touched the lepers ! There isn't a bit of that in me."

"There isn't a bit of that in most of us."

"And then when I am faint and weary—Dr. Clymer says my strength will not hold out if I attempt any large thing. I don't see why I should work hard when I am faint. He fainteth not, neither is weary. He always feels strong to work, and I feel like telling Him that His service is very hard. It is dreadful to say that, but it is true ; it relieves me to talk out my worst self to you.

Something has worn on me this last week ; I am not a brave woman."

And something was bringing her life out into new frankness ; her life-long friend was listening, surprised.

"No, Olive, we cannot be like Him who fainteth not, neither is weary. But cannot we be like Him when He was in our human life, bearing the burden of the flesh. He did then, this same unweary God, a man's work in a man's natural strength, with a man's weariness. Once He had leisure, no, not so much as to eat, and I think He was naturally as hungry and faint for want of food as you and I would be ; He taught the woman of Samaria when He was so tired that He sat down to rest ; and He was disturbed in His sleep by His frightened disciples to comfort them by His awakened presence. I think He worked when He was very tired.

"And not for pay."

"Olive, you are touching me now. I work for wages. When I preached I was paid regularly the first of every month. I had a wife and child to support. Do you think I should go out like those sent two by two, without purse and scrip and shoes ?"

"I am glad you reminded me of that," said Olive, relieved. "I remember He said afterward: 'But *now*, he that hath a purse, let him take it.' I live in the *now*; I must take my purse; and if I have it full, all the better, perhaps. If my life is for Him, my purse is a small part of it. I can put my purse in His keeping. Do you know I do want to fill my purse?"

"Ambitious woman! A whole house, and a full purse."

Olive laughed aloud. It was so pleasant and restful to be talking her heart out to somebody who understood every half sentence; to somebody who might know her worst self and love her not only just the same, but all the better.

"I have always known what I *had* to do next. If I could think only of myself, it would be easier to decide."

"What would you decide?"

"Oh, something very selfish. I would earn money and save money—how I would economize! And when I am fifty, perhaps I could have more than two rooms, with all my old, dear housekeeping things, and be the loveliest old maid you ever saw."

"You are that now. Don't wait to be fifty—"

"I meant about keeping house. I should be the conventional old maid, keep a cat and be particular, and not let Leila disarrange things, as I let her now; and I wouldn't let you put your head on my sofa pillow."

"Not if I turned it over?"

"Your head?"

"You are turning my head now. You are making me forget my errand to you. I must tell you that your income will not be so large after this month. You have twenty-five dollars a month, now; the small house your uncle owned rented for this amount last year, and has for three years, but it is out of repair, some modern improvements are necessary. You cannot afford to put it into such order that it will bring more rent, what will you do?"

"I suppose I must go to work," said Olive.

"At what? Teaching again?"

"What else am I fitted for?"

"I don't know. That has spoiled you for other things, probably. Are you sufficiently strong, do you think?"

Olive looked troubled ; was she strong enough to make teaching a success ?

" I confess I dread it."

" I dread it for you."

" How much rent will my house bring ?"

" I should advise you to put in better order."

" Will the carpenter and the plumber and the painter work for nothing ?"

" I should advise you to borrow the money."

" I hate to borrow money."

" Haven't you a friend in the world ?" he asked, forlornly.

" Oh, yes. Harriet Peters ! And you !"

" Will you accept a loan from me ?"

" May I pay your interest ?"

" Certainly. Ten per cent, if you choose."

" But where shall I get the interest."

" I will lend it to you," he laughed.

" But couldn't I *sell* the house ?" she asked, as the suggestion came to her.

" It is not in good condition to sell."

" But somebody might buy it to fix up and make money on it."

" That is an excellent idea. What will you take for it ?"

"You know what it is worth, I do not. I have never seen it."

"It is worth five or six thousand dollars. I can get that for you."

"Then I should have no anxiety or expense."

"You shall not have the anxiety or expense now. I will attend to it for you."

"And all I shall have to do will be to pay you interest until I can repay the loan. I must go to teaching then. Immediately! The schools open in two weeks. Do you suppose I can be re-appointed?"

"I have no doubt of it. But you would have to take the position that is open, and wait for a better one."

Olive drooped wearily, leaning her head on her hand.

"I wish I didn't dread it."

"I am glad you do."

"That is heartless."

"Because that gives me reason to hope that you will not dread another position I have for you."

"And women talk about not finding employment!"

"The trouble is to find women! There's em-

ployment enough. Men and women are always in demand."

"Am I in demand?"

"A good workman always is."

"But I can do only one thing."

"You can do two things. You understand house keeping."

"I suppose I *could* be a housekeeper."

"Aren't you too proud?"

"To be anybody's! Not to be somebody's."

"Well, then, I want you to be my housekeeper."

"What is to become of Leila?"

"Nothing serious. I wish her to make something of herself. She is to take up a regular course of study this winter and perfect herself in something. She has too many smatterings. Andrew and I and a good-sized house, with all the company we have, would tax her too seriously, with this study on her mind. She loves society and so do I. I like to have a house that I can invite a friend to for a week, whenever I choose. This kind of a house requires some management. You will have two servants. You are to be the head, and not in any sense the hands."

Olive's eyes were fixed on the gnarled roots at

her feet. Was there anything in the world she would like so well, after all ? This would be recreation and employment.

"But you shall not pay me."

"No, I will only put your house in order for you."

"And that will not cost me anything?"

"Two hundred dollars will put your house in excellent order ; three hundred at the utmost. If you will keep my house in order for one year, I will put your house in order for several years. I hope you can get better rent next year."

"But you are making this arrangement for my comfort ; you are not thinking of yourself at all."

"I expect *you* to think of my comfort."

"But I am afraid you cannot afford it," she returned, so eagerly and anxiously that he laughed aloud.

"I am not a very poor man. Leila's mother had money ; perhaps you do not know that. She gave me one-third, and her little daughter two-thirds of it."

"I did not know it."

"Then don't be too sorry for my philanthropic scheme."

She smiled and looked down at the roots; she found something in them, for she raised serious eyes and asked a serious question.

"I know you will answer me true, Dr. Provost."

"I am equally certain."

"Then tell me, if I do not accept this kindness—this position—will it be necessary for you to have some one else?"

"If I can find some one with your qualifications, a lady, with the requisite training, some one that Leila will take pleasure in, I shall secure her, if I can. Leila has often begged me to have a housekeeper. She has not thought of you. I flatter myself that I discovered you."

"It is so pleasant to think of! I like it better than raising canaries, or ants' eggs."

"You might spend your spare hours in those agreeable occupations."

"Is your housekeeper expected to go to market, and pay the bills?"

"She is expected to relieve my daughter of every care."

"You may not be satisfied with me."

"Oh, I'll engage you a month on trial. You know the ways of my house pretty thoroughly."

"For my own sake, for my own selfish sake, I like it better than any plan that has come to me."

"I should think you might."

"How much time will you give me?"

"How much do you want?"

"As I must earn money if I keep my house, I shall have to decide before school opens."

"That will suit me."

"Have you thought of any one else?" she asked.

"No."

"Would you advertise?"

"I shall take some step, probably that."

"Dr. Provost, I thank you very much," she said, rising.

"Miss Vanema, I thank *you* very much for taking me into consideration."

Then both laughed and turned to go up the lane together.

"I am reminded of a magazine story I read about the sweetest girl that became the sweetest old maid, and the sweetest things were always happening to her. With every good thing, she exclaimed, 'I always *am* so provided for.'"

"I am reminded of her, too."

"Why, have you read it?" Olive asked, innocently.

"I am not reminded of the story, but of *her*."

"I believe that is my ambition."

"Another one!"

"Oh, no, the old one; to be the sweetest old maid."

"Help Leila along to it."

"You selfish father!"

"I was thinking of her. It is a rare thing to become."

"Because old maids are rare?" asked Olive, saucily.

"Because sweet old maids are rare."

"Rarer than sweet wives?"

"No — perhaps not. But thoroughly sweet women *are* rare—in my experience. It is a great deal to be sweet. I wish my little girl were sweet."

"Perhaps to be sweetened is better than to be sweet," said Olive. "Whoever sees Miss Hannah ten years hence, I hope will see a sweetened woman! Oh, now I know; I'd like to have *her* live with me. Doctor, when my house is done, I'll

live in it myself, and have Miss Hannah ; but, oh dear, who will keep, rather *what* will keep the fire from going out ! The kettle must boil."

"Then you have decided to come !"

"Yes, I *have*," she said, firmly. "I will decide now. Then I will go home with you to-morrow—but, there's my promised visit to Dazey ! The old lady expects me, Mr. Menzies has written."

"Take a week for that. Leila will have things somewhat in order for the new housekeeper. The child will dance all over you in crazy gladness. She said I never could persuade you. I'll tell her I didn't. I believe she suffered because she thought I intended to marry."

"I don't think you did persuade me. It was that last thought of having Miss Hannah to live with me. And having my own roof over my head. Twenty-seven Halsey Street, isn't it ? Now I remember, that is not far from where Mr. Menzies has lived all his life. It's a pleasant street, for he says his home is very pleasantly situated."

"I'll take you to it. It's in a pleasant city. Your family expect to move out the last day of this month."

"Then where will my income come from next month!"

"My housekeeper will not be in need of food and shelter."

"But without you, what should I do?"

"Oh, you could fall back on your savings."

"Dr. Provost, after my board is paid this week, I shall have exactly nine dollars and forty-one cents."

"Somebody has been extravagant," he said lightly.

"Somebody has enjoyed it," she said, thinking of the wan face that grew rosy and the tired eyes with their look of rest.

"You know you always *are* so provided for."

"By the time I want to go home, (hasn't that a pleasant sound?) I shall be strong enough to teach, and Miss Hannah shall keep house for me!"

"That sounds so enticing that I wish I were a lone, lorn woman myself."

"I should think men *would* wish they were women!" Olive exclaimed, in ecstasy of admiration of woman's opportunities.

"I shouldn't think of wishing to be Diantha," he answered, smiling.

The man at her side was as handsome and winning as Andrew Croft, and there the similarity ended; this man had a purpose in life and held it; for every fine thing he said, he performed ten finer ones; he was more a doer of the word, than, like fluent Andrew, a talker of it. While this man was doing a fine thing, Andrew would be writing a poem about some fine impulse in himself. And there it died its natural death: the poem was never published, the impulse never moved into action.

In words something like this Olive answered Andrew when he asked her persistently that morning why she would not become his wife.

"You know I love you, Olive."

"Yes, I know that. I believe that. But I have no faith in you. You depress me."

"Tell me why; make me understand," he pleaded. Dr. Provost was in her mind, she did not speak his name, but she told Andrew in what he differed from the man in whom she could have faith.

"And you think I never can be like that?"

"I think you never *will*."

"Why will I not?" he asked, irritably.

"Because you will *not* to, I suppose. You may *wish* to be what you admire, but you do not *will* it,

you even will to take the contrary course ; I suppose you must will something ; your will is not utterly paralyzed. I do not know how wicked you are—but I do know that you are very weak. If you ask me what evil have you done, I ask you what good thing have you ever done ? You do obey an impulse once in a while when it costs you little trouble and less thought.”

“Olive,” he said bitterly, “I believe you despise me.”

“I think—sometimes—I almost do,” she answered sadly. “There is no reason but your selfishness and your weak will. You talked half an hour last night most beautifully and convincingly about every man knowing the heart of his neighbor and never passing the lowest by, and not an hour later a man came in the lane and asked you, as you happened to be nearest, if he could get a drink of buttermilk at the house and you told him roughly to go about his business and then you went in and told Diantha you had kept one tramp from her door. How do you know he was dishonest and lazy and not deserving even that buttermilk that is thrown to the pigs ? You did not ask him one question. He looked tired and ill.”

"I didn't want to be troubled, I was talking to you."

"It was no trouble to talk half an hour about him."

"Don't trample on me, now I'm down. I was born with a weak will, a sweet temper and a weak will. A wife with a strong will could move me as she would."

"I pity the wife! A woman has a life of her own to live."

"You are hard and bitter. You have seen some one you like better."

"It would be hard not to—in a world where strong men abound."

"I do not drink, I have no vices, I am not a spendthrift. I should be a very good man in a home of my own with a wife—"

"To lean on!"

"Well, yes, since you put it that way."

"I suppose there are men like you with strong-willed wives. There's David Van Der Zee!"

"Do you think I would submit as he does?"

"I hope you will never be under a yoke like his."

"That sweet little daughter would never put any man under."

"No; she will never marry a weak man either."

"Do you mean that she would refuse me?" he asked in repressed anger.

"I was thinking of her, not at all of you, Andrew; though you may find it difficult to believe. She has great reverence and admiration for strength of character."

"That Menzies, for instance," he said, mockingly.

"She knows him better than we do."

"I didn't follow you around to the hammock to quarrel with you, Olive. I beg your pardon if I have been rude. Your strength is more to me than you would care to know. So is Leila's, and her father's. With you three I feel that I can do as you do."

"Than if you were 'with Christ,' you could do as He willed you to."

"Yes, I know I could."

"With us, you cannot, you see. You need something beside our strength."

"Yes," he assented.

"Andrew, I am so sorry. I have to speak the whole truth, since you asked me."

"I did not think you could be so hard. You love children, and sick people, and old people—why don't you love what you call my 'weakness'? I should think it might appeal to you."

"I have written unto you, young men, because ye are *strong*."

"Who said that?"

"John, the Beloved. He was very sweet—and strong. He gives the three characteristics of young men: 'I have written unto you because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.'"

"Only that kind do overcome the wicked one."

"You see the secret of it!"

"The word of God abiding in them. I read the Bible, if that's what you mean."

"That isn't what I mean."

"What do you mean?"

He was standing under the apple-tree at the head of her hammock, looking down into her face; she had not once, during this conversation, looked up into his face. His voice was as much as she could bear.

"Look up into the boughs over your head: see those apples, growing into firmness and flavor and beauty and shapeliness; when those blossoms began to form into fruit, if that bough had been broken off away from the life of the tree, would they be fruitful boughs? That bough *abides* in the life of the tree."

"I remember what I read," he said, stubbornly.

She would not reply. She knew she was not gentle with him.

"Olive, I cannot *do* it; I acknowledge it. It isn't in me to do it. It is sorrow enough to me?"

"I know that."

There was no upbraiding in the voice.

"Then why do you blame me and despise me?"

"Do I? I think I love you sometimes; but it is as I might love a child—but in a child there is hope—and you do not give me any hope."

"Am I weaker than I used to be?" he demanded.

"You know best."

"I am not stronger. But I tell you it isn't in me."

"The life is in that bough as well as in the tree."

Giving himself an impatient shake, he walked away. Could a man take himself into his own hands and make any thing he would of himself? If she could live two lives and be two women, would she give one of those lives to this weak-willed man? Had not her father been a weak-willed man? But having one life, and that life belonging not to herself, a life lived with Christ, must she not live her very best? That would not be her very best. If he were a better man because of her, that would be because of her, not because of himself; it would be *her* life and *her* strength. John did not write unto young men because they had strong wives, but because they were strong themselves.

There were women in the world who loved weak men, and made them good wives. She was not one of them, she said, and put the thought of him away from her. To-day was her Thankful Day. Every Friday was her special private and personal Thanksgiving Day. Each day of the week, in her life hid with Christ, had its special significance. Usually her first waking thought with its memory of the day, brought the day's object.

On Monday she prayed for all the girls and boys she had ever taught, that they might live the life hidden with Christ in God. The other days, in her prayers, held all she cared for, every interest in her life, every interest she had in every one in all the world.

Something had happened to make this day joyfully remembered in her thanksgiving.

The letter came in the morning mail. She drew it from her pocket to read it again, and as she read a hand stopped the swaying of her hammock.

"I beg your pardon, I did not notice you were busy," said Allan Menzies.

"I am not," she answered, slipping out and dropping down on the grass; "sit down, I will read my letter to you. I wanted to tell somebody. I had it to show Dr. Provost and then forgot it."

He sat down beside her, taking off his hat and putting it on his knees.

"He is a great friend of yours."

"He is a dear, good friend of mine. The best brother in the world could not be kinder. You know I haven't any brother, as your sisters have. Nothing like this letter ever happened to me before. It makes me too glad to know how glad I am.

Last winter when I was first recovering from my illness, at Dr. Provost's house, I was reading the Bible, greatly in need of strength and hope, and something helped me. I was so helped that I wrote about it to a friend. She is editor of *Advocate and Guardian*, a paper that always helps tired people and discouraged people and weak people—she says, (I'm wandering, like Diantha,) that we have no idea how many weak people there are in the world—and she puts things in especially for such, so she put my letter in, not in the form of a letter, however. And to-day, you brought me the letter that tells me something about it. It you don't mind, I'll read it. If you care!"

"I care very much."

She hesitated, rustled the sheet of note paper, and then began to read huskily. It was harder to tell him about it than she thought. She could talk so much more frankly to Dr. Provost. It would have been easier before she knew that he was not engaged to Virginia Graham.

"Do you know who wrote that little piece, *A Thought for a Weary Time*? I think he or she ought to know this little history. We live about a mile and a quarter from Easterley, between two

large manufactories. In the next village north is a shcool-house, where for thirty years or more they have had a Sunday school at two in the afternoon and preaching at three. Always when at home, I have been with them, having a class of boys. My mother's increasing age and feebleness, at last, obliged me to give it up. Now for my story about something in that article. The school now has to be cared for by any one who is willing from week to week. The Assistant Superintendent was a young man, upright and good, but not a Christian. I often said to him: "John, one thing, only one thing, thou lackest."

"Well, I am going to attend to it some time," he always said, "but not now."

"In your paper—"

"This letter is written to my friend," explained Olive. "I shall ask her for the writer's name, so that I may write to her. She has given only her initials."

Then she read on:

"In your paper I read that article, and mother and I looked in the Bible to find out all the rest of it. It was about Paul's soldiers. I didn't know Paul had any soldiers. Mother and I studied over

and over, but we couldn't find all we wanted to know.'"

"What did you say about Paul's soldiers?" Allan asked, interestedly.

"I'll tell you some time, if I can think of it."

"Then I said to John: 'You know all about the Bible; what of Paul's soldiers?'"

"He said he would look it up."

"Now, to make a long story short, we then begun to hunt up all we could find about Paul, and became so interested we procured all the books and writings which would give us any light. John held a meeting to study about it once a week, then the house would not hold the people. Then the ministers of different churches came to preach. The result was a large gathering into the Shepherd's Fold. John and his wife soon entered the new way. Almost all the young girls were converted and joined one of the churches. Could that writer have seen the rooms filled each night and all the interest that grew out of that little beginning, how thankful she would be. Our Father knows my heart, how thankful I am.'"

The paper rustled in her fingers; it had not been easy to be so frank with him.

"Olive, I am learning, I have learned, I *know*, that working for God, with Him, as He works, is the only work worth doing. I am a beginner, and a bungler. The Sabbath before I came, I became a member of the church. It was a great surprise to all at home. I derided Butler and laughed at Jane when they took that step; I said I was as well off outside and meant to stay outside. The only work I have undertaken is prayer meeting and Sunday school. Here am I, send me! I shall be sent into something."

"I am continually surprised at the openings; there's something every day."

"That little work of yours was chosen to begin a great work."

"In such weakness I wrote it."

"My work will all be in 'such weakness.' I found you to tell you that I am going to housekeeping. Are you interested? That's a kind of work, isn't it?"

"Woman's work," she said decidedly.

"But housekeeping isn't much without a man at the head of it."

A quick step around the back of the old house arrested Olive's attention; while she listened, look-

ing, Andrew appeared; he came to her from his own room; he said he loved this little whitewashed room as a hermit might love his cell.

"Excuse me," he said, hastening toward the two under the apple-tree, but I have something to tell Miss Vanema. She was speaking of lovely old John and his writing to young men because they were strong, and just now, in packing my few books, I opened one at random, and came upon something she will be interested in; a tradition concerning this same John. A youth whom he loved, he commended to the bishops of the church as a promising disciple; but the young fellow fell in with evil associates and was led astray; he wasn't 'strong,' then, Olive, and from bad went on to worse, until he became a captain of robbers. When John returned from Patmos, he heard of the young captain, and hastened to the robbers' retreat, and allowed himself to be seized and taken into the captain's presence. Think of the grand, beautiful, gentle, strong old man standing silent in that fellow's presence! The robber captain, stung with remorse, fled away from him. I imagine John spoke no word; himself was impressive enough. With his loving heart breaking for him, the old

man hastened after him to speak of repentance and forgiveness. We can imagine him saying: 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate.' The young man was brought back, repented, and led many of his band into the way of strength. Olive, isn't that hope enough for anybody?"

"It is a beautiful tradition—it is like John."

He went back to his packing. Menzies said, after a moment:

"There's a good deal in him; I'm ashamed that I had to overcome a dislike to him; he irritates me unbearably, at times."

"He irritates every one, himself included. I was very cross to him awhile ago; he's very good to forgive me. But, about your housekeeping—"

"Mine and my sister's. Old bachelor and old maid are going to housekeeping together; my father held his household of six children together, now we are to make homes of our own.

"The few thousands he left (Amzi needs his share, and Butler his, for he is to take a wife, but as I am not encumbered, my share will be divided among my three sisters) will enable us to keep on as we might like; so we decided to make three homes. It will be better for all of us, our lives will broaden

—unmarried men and unmarried women are apt to grow narrow, don't you think so ?”

“No : it is those who have homes, who within their own four walls crowd all they care for and live for, who grow narrow, providing only for their own households, letting their charity end where it begins, at home. I don't like to hear you say that. Marriage has a very narrowing process upon some women.”

“Perhaps it deepens them.”

“That's a play upon words. And perhaps it is in the woman, herself ; I don't like to think it is in the divine institution of marriage.”

“Don't say so, then.”

“I have unsaid it. Now tell me how your house-keeping will broaden you.”

“By making me work harder,” he said, with a laugh.

“As if you needed motive !”

“The more motives that are piled on, the more variety life has. Look at the faded women in these houses and talk of a broad, unmarried life. Aren't you ashamed of yourself ?”

“Perhaps I remarked that it depended upon the woman, and the man.”

"To be personal, would a married life have narrowed you?"

"I shouldn't have sent roots out in as many directions as I have now; but, then, I had that narrowing influence—I had a home to keep up."

"A woman like you to talk against home life!"

"A selfish home life, if you please. To be personal again, a life as selfish and self-seeking as Diantha's."

"As you said it depended upon the woman, you are simply speaking of that one woman."

"Then I will revise my speech again: I think every man and every woman should guard against the selfish and narrowing tendencies of small communities, the home, the village, one small church, one large church—and give himself to the work and interests of the world—"

"A man can sit at his 'ain fireside' and read the world's newspapers, can't he?"

"Yes, if he doesn't become too comfortable and sit there too long," she retorted.

"All of which is nothing against my renting a small house and taking my sister to keep house with me, I suppose."

"On the contrary, I'm very much in favor of that."

"So Letty has brought herself to be. She doesn't like housekeeping; I wonder why she doesn't. I used to think all women love housekeeping and children."

"What does she love better?"

"She has no peculiar talent or taste. I suppose, take the world all around, few women have, or men either. I am going into the High School. I've always had a craze for teaching. I'm a poor man, Olive."

"Have you nine dollars?" she inquired with the utmost seriousness.

"Nine and a half. Do you wish to borrow?"

"Not till I spend my nine. I was thinking that you were richer than I am. But I have a position, too. Situation, I should say."

"Are you going back into school again?" he asked with some impatience.

"No; that isn't wise. Dr. Clymer advised me to keep out of school. I have been engaged as housekeeper, in a small, but very desirable family. The head of the house is not a stranger, and his daughter is a dear friend."

"*You !* Somebody's housekeeper ! I don't like that," he exclaimed in strong displeasure.

"But I do. It exactly suits me."

"Cannot you live without that ?"

"I prefer to live with it. I am not proud."

"I did not know I was. I am proud for you. How will you be treated ?"

"Better than I deserve," she said mischievously.

"Is that all you care to tell me about it ?"

"Come and see me, then you will not need to be told anything !"

"How much of the drudgery will you do ?"

"Washing, ironing, scrubbing ! I know how to do all three. Many a Saturday I have done a little of all three."

"They keep a servant, of course."

"Oh, yes ; cook and laundress, and second girl. As I make the third in the family, my duties will not be arduous."

"When do you go to your—place ?"

"Don't be cross about it. Your sister will be somebody's housekeeper, why shouldn't I be ? I go as soon as I return from Dazey."

"Did you answer an advertisement ?"

"I should not have thought of doing such a thing had not the work been offered me. Now I have teased you long enough; I am going to the happiest home I ever had—Dr. Provost's."

"I don't know how much better I like that."

"I know how much better *I* like it. Will you take my hammock down, please?"

He took it down and carried it over his arm to the door of the broad, breezy hall; Miss Hannah was standing in the doorway of Andrew's room.

"That makes you feel better, I guess," Miss Hannah was saying.

The voice in reply sounded as if wrenched out of pain.

Miss Hannah turned, and seeing Olive came to her.

"Mr. Croft isn't a bit well. He has the dreadfulest pain. It came as sudden as a stroke of lightning. I was in the spring-house and he came at the back door here and called to me. He and Hiram was jumping off that rock in the lane last night and I think he has sprained himself. He says he didn't sleep very well. I've given him the hottest bowl of ginger tea! can you think of anything to do?"

"I will find Dr. Provost," said Olive.

"Olive!" called the voice tense with pain, "come here, I want you."

Olive went in. Andrew had thrown himself across the foot of his bed; he raised himself and caught her hand.

"I don't know how to bear pain. I'm the veriest baby. I want you not to feel hard—as you did awhile ago."

"Andrew, I do not feel hard. I thought I must say what I did. Don't *you* feel hard."

"I couldn't," he said, with a look she never forgot.

Dr. Provost was reading the morning paper to Leila on the piazza; Olive caught it from him and hurried him to Andrew.

An hour later Hiram dashed down the road on horseback, toward Monroe. Dr. Clymer was in Andrew's room within half an hour; he remained with him two hours and returned at midnight. No trunks were packed that afternoon; no one spoke of to-morrow. Dr. Provost did not leave Andrew; Leila stayed with Olive.

Olive's pale face was pressed into the pillow, she slept fitfully, dreaming of pain and awaking to cry

out. Miss Hannah came up at dawn to say that Mr. Croft had fallen asleep, Dr. Provost had gone to his room and she and Cousin Menzies were to watch. "Dr. Clymer says he cannot find a better nurse than I am," Hannah said proudly, with tears trembling in her eyes, "so I am to be with him till he gets well."



XVII.

DAYS AND NIGHTS.

“Say not ‘Good night,’ but in some brighter clime
Bid me ‘Good morning.’”

—MRS. BARBAULD.

SEVEN days and nights; the changes were from hours of agony to a day of exhaustion; at last came utter weakness; he could not lift his hand, his words were as low as a breath.

“His mother cannot get here,” Miss Hannah whispered one midnight to Olive.

Olive had come down from her chamber to listen at his open door.

“Would he know me if I should stand a moment where he could see me?”

“I don’t think he sees anything.”

Olive stepped within the doorway. Andrew lay with his eyes closed, motionless, his lips apart; she was not sure that he breathed.

She would not see that look again; she would never see any look again.

Dr. Provost was walking up and down in the starlight, within the beckoning of hand or voice at the door: Menzies was stationed at the foot of the bed, his head dropped on his hand. He did not stir as Olive entered.

She stood looking down into Andrew's face; the still work of death was upon it; he had gone, he could not see her face, he could not hear her voice; would he know if she touched him ever so softly?

Would it disturb him? Was he asleep, or had he passed into something other than sleep?

His hair was like himself; she might touch that. She bent and with her lips touched his hair; not an eyelash stirred, he did not know that she cared so much, and if he knew what difference would it make?

If he saw the Lord's face that was all she asked for him; not life here, but life with Christ forever. Then he would be strong.

"Last night—no, to-night—about sundown, he whispered something," said Miss Hannah. "I only heard that it was about a young man in a boat. I suppose his mind was wandering."

Without another look Olive stepped out into the hall again. Leila came down the stairway sobbing, and went into the little room Andrew loved; Olive went to the door and looked out into the stillness and starlight; a light was burning in the kitchen at Diantha's, Hiram was coming towards her from the lane; but nothing was real or near to her, nothing save that face with its shut eyes and parted lips and another face—the Lord compassionate, who knew the secret of every life, and felt every breath toward Him.

“If any man sin, we have an Advocate.”

Another day passed, another midnight came; the still work went on; and then every one went out, and Olive and Leila went over to the other house.

That was Saturday; Monday afternoon the Provosts returned to the city, Andrew's mother was to meet them there; Olive stayed at Diantha's until the telegram came that Mrs. Croft had arrived, and then went to be with Leila the day of the funeral service.

“You must go to Dazey,” Leila said the next morning, “that old lady is looking for you.”

“I would rather not — I want to stay with you.”

"Papa and I have each other, and Auntie needs me."

"I must stay with her all I can. Olive, darling, you must rest somewhere. Can you rest there?"

"I rest everywhere," said Olive.

But she was persuaded, and that evening found her in the small sitting-room of the red house she had never forgotten. The old lady had gone upstairs and was asleep, Jane Menzies would not disturb her, the arrival might give her a wakeful night.

"Would you like the room you had then?" inquired Jane. "Nothing changes in this house. Auntie said it was for you."

Could it be true? Was it herself? That glass on the high bureau with the crack in it reflected her face fifteen years ago; not *this* face, but the girl's face, the face of the girl who had a "crying spell" because her father would not let her stay another week, as she coaxed.

She had "another week" now. She would be down in the morning as if it were the first morning of that week she coaxed for and cried about.

How easily her tears came in those days!

Now she felt as if no sorrow of her own would ever touch her again.

Andrew's message to her, spoken to Dr. Provost, was with her every hour ; she thought it was with her in her sleep.

"Tell her I was very weak—but I prayed."

XVIII.

"ANOTHER WEEK."

"Shall I be ashamed to give culture
To what God has sown ?
When nature asks bread, shall I offer
A serpent or stone ?
For could I out-weary its yearnings
By fasting or pain,
Would life have a better fulfilment
Or death have a gain ?
Nay, God will not leave us unanswered
In any true need ;
His will may be writ in an instinct
As well as a creed."

—ALICE CARY.

"I couldn't live alone," said the old lady. "I tried it; I should be dreadfully lonesome if it wasn't for other folks."

"So Amzi and I had to come."

"Yes, Jane came and stayed awhile, and I liked her so, I couldn't let her go. And you can't think

what a help Amzi is. He understands things. The boy has a long head for farming; he says he's going to turn my farm into a garden; and I expect he will."

The old lady gave a contented little chuckle. She had come in from the garden with a small basket of ripe tomatoes, and was sitting in the kitchen doorway with the basket in her wide lap.

"I want you to *stay*, Olive—I used to call you Olive then, didn't I?—and do just as you used to. Make cake, if you like, and go to the spring for water, and help Jane do things. I don't need much waiting on; I'm as spry as a girl. I can see as well as I ever could. I never did use glasses. Glasses is for young folks."

Jane Menzies was tall and pale, dark and thin, not attractive to people usually; she was attractive to Olive. Amzi was round faced, brown eyed, short and stout, as shy and awkward as a boy of fifteen.

He was silent at the table, ignoring knife and fork when possible, and taking his food with a spoon; his words were abrupt when he did speak; when he was not at work he had a book in his hand.

"Nobody understands Amzi, but me," Jane confided to Olive, as they washed the dinner dishes together. "Allan has no patience with him; he says there's nothing in him; he is as shut up as an oyster with him."

"Oysters are delicious when they are opened," said Olive, carefully wiping one of the old-time dishes.

"Allan may care now to see what is in him. He has always been the most unselfish brother to us girls, but he let Amzi alone. Amzi felt it. There's the greatest change in Allan. I never saw anything like it. I never *saw* a change before. I didn't know any one as good and kind as he was before *could* change so. It is more what he *is*, than what he does. I can't explain it. It's as different as light from darkness. And was so sudden! It took our breaths away. The first morning after he came home, when poor father was so ill, he said we would have family prayers as usual. He took the Bible and read. I didn't know what he read was in the Bible before. He read in a new way—for him, and there was something new in it for me. And his prayer! It was not like a prayer. Not like father's prayers; that was something new, too.

It was not in phrases, the kind we hear, it was like somebody talking to somebody he knew, and thanking him ; it was full of thanks, and asking for something, and telling about something. I thought if prayer were like that I should like to pray, too. It made you forget the things you wanted. It made you think—you know how. Can't you imagine ?

Yes, Olive could imagine. She heard him pray kneeling at Andrew's bedside ; she was standing in the door of the spring-house.

"I think that more than anything has made Amzi care for him," Jane ran on as she poured hot water over her dishes, "and they will get together now, somehow. He's coming Friday night to spend Sunday. Aunt Betsey wants him to come. She told me to write and say that she wouldn't take 'no' for an answer."

On Saturdays, when she was at liberty, she used to help Miss Tunison in the kitchen, this same kitchen, with the bare clean floor, the two small, high-silled windows that looked out into the road, the sink with its pump, the row of shelves above it, and the two doors, one opening into a back yard, where the wood-pile was, and the other leading you into the front yard, where the hollyhocks and rose

bushes were. The hollyhocks were there now, and the big square flower-bed; was there nothing changed beside herself? Miss Tunison, in her white frilled cap and broad white apron, was unchanged, except in age and feebleness; everybody had to grow old; every body, not every thing; the hollyhocks had not, nor the two tall elms.

If Allan should enter through that open door—how changed he would be. She almost was not willing to see him enter; she almost longed for the Allan with the smooth face and brown hair; but no; she would not give up the serious eyes, the kindly, elderly way that was becoming so restful, she *knew* she would not go back and be the girl again, if he must go back and be the young man again.

She laughed, it was a concession; but it made her so sure of herself, and before, after all, she had not been as sure of herself as she wished to be. Now she was glad and could give thanks for the years, for what they had given and withheld since last she stood in that kitchen.

Jane wiped out her dish-pan carefully, and hung it on a nail over the kitchen table; she was Miss Tunison's housekeeper; Dr. Provost's housekeeping

was altogether a different affair. She would have leisure for herself, and society the most congenial, when she was in the mood for it. Jane would have Aunt Betsey to amuse and Amzi and Hiram Anderson to talk to, and the neighbors would run in, and there would be church societies, when the feeble old woman could spare her; Aunt Betsey retired early, she would find the short winter evenings long; she wondered if there were *spring* enough in Jane to keep the fresh life continually bubbling.

"The new school-teacher will board with us," remarked Jane, as she brushed the stove hearth with the turkey wing. "Will he be pleasant company?"

"He's a book-worm," said Olive. "You will have an old lady and two book-worms for company."

"He will be company for Amzi," was the contented reply.

The old lady was taking her afternoon nap in the sitting-room; Jane went up stairs; Olive was left alone in the kitchen.

Fifteen years ago what would she have done with herself? Then she knew the village girls and all the village children, now every face was unfamil-

iar; her trunk was at Dr. Provost's, her books and work were in it, she had nothing but herself and all out-doors.

She might walk to the bridge and stand and look down into the brook, she might go to the hollow in the woods where she and Allan used to sit and talk. Life was full of things and people to talk about then; her life was not so full now; it did not seem as full as when she first went to Diantha's.

Why, she must be lonely! Lonely here at Dazey, where she had longed to come! But it was not Dazey, nor the kind old lady, nor the little red house, it was—what was it? Something was gone; the something she left that morning she was so sorry to go, was not here. She would be glad to go back to Dr. Provost's and be his housekeeper and Leila's friend. Allan would come to see Jane and Amzi, and go away early Monday morning; she would like to go away early Monday morning; it was fair to the Provosts' to go to them as soon as they needed her.

Jane came down the narrow stairway into the kitchen with something in her hand.

"Allan sent it to me in his last letter; I thought

you would understand what I mean by the change in him if you should see it."

"Thank you, very much," Olive said, gratefully.

"You knew him long ago when I was quite a little girl, he said."

"Yes, here at Dazey."

"I remember it; he came home that summer and talked about you. I remember something he said; I had a great way of watching people and trying to be like them in those days, and when he said you made people care to make the best of themselves, I thought I would like to be with you and learn to do it."

"Oh, I am sorry—you must be disappointed."

"He isn't. I asked him if you were like that now, and he said it was the first thing that struck him about you; it was your unconscious influence."

"But I am sure," said Olive, remembering that Diantha had not liked her and that she had done nothing for her, "that he is an exception; no one else feels it."

"I wish I could tell you how you make me feel!" returned Jane, knitting her brows in the endeavor to explain, "no one else ever made me feel so. I began to feel it before you had been here fifteen

minutes; you made me thrill—it was very delightful, it keeps being very delightful. I feel it all through my heart and lungs and head, it is the gentlest electricity. I slept better last night because of it, I think you are the kind to be with sick people.”

“I love to be with anybody that I can help. I think I was lonely just now because I could do nothing for somebody.”

“You are *being* something all the time.”

“That—to you. But you are another exception. Nobody ever told me that before. It must be something in the way you are made.”

“Then I am glad I am made so,” said Jane brightening, “perhaps it’s in me to be made strong.”

“That’s the happiness of weakness. The *growing* strong is so much. I think every living thing must love to grow. There’s a witchery about seeing things grow.”

Jane laid the neatly cut slip in her hand.

“You may keep it if you care for it.”

“What do you do afternoons?”

“Rest—I have to rest.”

“Then I will go out in some of the old places.

Perhaps they have something left behind for me."

Keeping the slip in her hand, not looking at it, she went through the yard, climbed a broken rail fence and crossed a field to the hollow in the woods. Amzi was plowing and whistling in a field next to the woods.

She did not unfold the paper for some time. It was all she could have of Allan until he came to-morrow night; if he were there, he would read it to her.

Was it strange, was it wrong, that she could grow with more enjoyment having some one to grow with her? She had been solitary all her life, no one had lived her life with her, no one had lived *her* life, they had lived their own lives beside her; sometimes she had a touch of this companionship; one did not have to be alone with Christ, in God.

Christ had prayed that His disciples might be *one*: "that they may be one in us."

And only His disciples could be "one in us."

Fifteen years ago Allan Menzies could not have lived her life with her.

Then she unfolded the paper and read it.

"Dannecker, the German sculptor, occupied

eight years upon a marble statue of Christ. He had previously exercised his genius upon subjects taken from the Greek and Roman mythology, and had won a great reputation. The celebrated statue of Ariadne in the garden of Herr Bethman at Frankfort is his work. Critics of art have given him rank with Michael Angelo and Canova.

“ ‘When he had labored two years upon his statue of Christ, the work was apparently finished. He called into his studio a little girl, and, directing her attent on to the statue, asked her, “Who is that?” She replied, “A great man.” The artist turned away disheartened. His artistic eye had been deceived. He had failed, and his two years of labor were thrown away. But he began anew, and, after another year or two had passed, he again invited the child into his studio, and repeated the inquiry, “Who is that?” This time he was not disappointed. After looking in silence for a while, her curiosity deepened into awe and thankfulness, and, bursting into tears, she said, in low and gentle tones, “Suffer little children to come unto me.” It was enough; the untutored instinct of the child had divined his meaning, and he knew that his work was a success.

"He believed then, and ever afterward, that he had been inspired of God to do that thing. He thought he had seen a vision of Christ in his solitary vigils. He had but transferred to the marble the image which the Lord had shown to him. His rising fame attracted the attention of Napoleon, and he was requested to make a statue of Venus similar to the Ariadne, for the gallery of the Louvre. He refused, saying, "A man who has seen Christ would commit sacrilege if he should employ his art in the carving of a pagan goddess. My art is henceforth a consecrated thing."

"His life is henceforth a consecrated thing," she said aloud. "I can see that. Now I can talk to him to my heart's content."

The next afternoon the stage stopped at the post-office in Dazey; Allan waited for the mail to be distributed, and with a letter in his hand for Miss Olive Vanema walked down the road towards the bridge. He stood a while leaning against the railing of rotten wood; a letter was in his hand to-night; would this make her cry?

The address was in Leila's hand; she wrote with a stub pen, like a man.

But she would not come out to meet him and ask

for a letter, as she did before; she would not take one step forward to meet him.

Jane was at the gate watching, old Aunt Betsey stood on the kitchen door-stone.

Olive came, in a moment, down the kitchen stairway; they had not been together since Andrew died, they shook hands without a word; both were thinking of him.

At the tea-table Jane sat in Aunt Betsey's old place, and poured the tea, and Amzi sat where Allan used to sit, next to Olive.

"Oh isn't this nice!" exclaimed Jane, "I wish it would be like this all the time."

"So do I," replied the old lady. "I haven't forgotten how Allan and Olive used to talk and have fun, and I'm not too far gone to enjoy it again."

"Neither are we," said Allan.

"Did your letter bring good news, Olive?" asked Aunt Betsey. "I don't like letters. I keep mine till next day, for fear there's something in them."

"Mine is from Leila. I've told you about Leila."

"You've told me about 'most everybody; I

never see anybody that knew as many folks as you do. What good does it do you ? "

" You like to hear about them," said Jane.

" Oh, yes ; it's like a story. Old folks and children like stories."

" And young folks live them," said Allan.

" What *was* in your letter, Olive ? " persisted Aunt Betsey.

" Nothing new. Only it is my birthday to-day, and she always remembers me on my birthday."

" How old are you ? I suppose you ain't old enough to be ashamed of your age."

" Or old enough to be proud of it," said Allan.

" You'll be proud when you are ninety-two and can pick lima beans," retorted Aunt Betsey.

" I am thirty-six to-day," Olive replied, " and I can't pluck my first gray hair and wrap it in silver paper and write a poem to it."

" That is young. Very young. Allan is young, too."

" Anybody is young under seventy," laughed Amzi, who had not spoken before during the meal.

" We are stricken in years, in this youth's eye," observed the elder brother, " but as age is only a matter of opinion, I suppose it doesn't matter."

"I hate things that are a matter of opinion," Amzi burst out; "such things are not worth thinking of—opinions change every half hour."

"You contended awhile ago that pennyroyal was a pleasant odor in itself," said Jane, "and that is only your opinion."

"The ancients, whose sense of smell was cultivated in the extreme, enjoyed the odor of *asafœtida*, which is repulsive to moderns; is that only an opinion? Shall we cultivate ourselves up to *asafœtida*?"

"Then we would have the opinion that we liked it. Then, Allan, opinion is the result of cultivation."

The removal of some restraint was unfettering Amzi's tongue.

"I would like to know what is the difference between *opinion* and *truth*. In other words, is Miss Vanema young or old to-day?"

"Amzi!" rebuked Jane, shocked.

"She knows me," said Amzi. "I knew she knew me as soon as she looked at me."

"What did Leila send you for your birthday?" inquired Aunt Betsey, who had been impatiently holding her question in abeyance.

"Money. A ten dollar bill, and her father sent another, so my good friends have made me rich again."

Jane had wondered that Miss Vanema's gloves should be so carefully mended, and her shoes were shabby, even although so painstakingly blackened.

"But you've got a house," said the old lady.

"O, Allan," cried Jane, "it's *that* house! The house we have always delighted in, in Halsey Street. So old-fashioned and out of repair, and home-like."

"I have never seen my house," Olive remarked; "it has not been my house very long. My uncle occupied it himself at the time of his death. It is to be put in excellent repair, and I have to earn the money to do it; my whole year is mortgaged to that extent; it will be ready for tenants before long."

"Why can you not pay the expense out of your rent then," asked Allan, "and consider the money a loan?"

"But I must exist in the body meanwhile; I must occupy space, and I'm not satisfied without a seat at somebody's table. I have tastes, also. It costs a great deal for me to live. In a year—be-

fore that—I shall be free from debt ; as soon as my rent comes in, I shall pay Dr. Provost in monthly instalments.”

“And he will pay you by the month,” said Allan, smiling. “What a thing it is to be a woman and have a head for business !”

“What would you have me do ?”

“It virtually amounts to this: you are Dr. Provost’s housekeeper, with an income of your own.”

“But I couldn’t live on my income.”

“Extravagant woman !” he exclaimed.

“Oh, I could board at Diantha’s—”

“Or here !” cried Jane, delightedly.

“But I wish to do something better ; I have been the man of the house, and I wish to do it again ; to *board* isn’t the aim of my existence.”

“You have to be a working woman,” said Allan.

“I think Letty might like that—to be a housekeeper,” suggested Letty’s sister.

“She will like to be mine,” said her brother.

“Are you really going to get a house, Allan, and live by yourself ?” asked Aunt Betsey, leaning toward him ; “and all the bread and cheese you have you’ll put upon the shelf.”

"But I'll not go to London to get me a wife," he added.

"Allan, I wish you *would*," said the old lady, with impressiveness.

"No; I'll get her first, and take her to London."

The old lady straightened herself and finished her cup of tea; Amzi went out to bring in wood to fill the box; Jane arose and began to collect the dishes.

"I'll wipe the dishes to-night," observed Aunt Betsey. "Olive, you go and take a walk. I don't believe you've been everywhere yet."

"I'll take her there before I take my wife to London," said Allan, "if she will go! Olive, will you go to Laurel Lane with me?"

"No," said Olive, with mischief in her eyes.

"Olive, I hope you will lay up your money!" advised Aunt Betsey, with unusual severity. "I'm laying up things for the day of adversity."

"I should think the day of adversity would be now, then," replied Allan.

"It would be with me," said Olive. "I had just enough money to get home. I counted it this morning. And if I put a quarter in the plate on

Sunday, I wouldn't have enough. It's very exciting to be poor."

"A penny is enough for the plate," continued Aunt Betsey; "everybody puts pennies on."

"She gave Amzi and me each a penny last Sunday," laughed Jane.

Olive had said once that nothing that happened to her ever startled her with its newness; she could look back and see the way it came. But something startled her that night with its newness; she could not look back and see the way it came.

They were standing on the bridge together; he had pulled a handful of mint, and given it to her, he remembered that she liked brook mint. The sunset had gone, and the twilight was going; the moon would soon be risen.

"Olive, were you engaged to Andrew Croft?"

"No."

"You loved him."

He did not ask the question; he stated a truth.

"Yes, I did love him. There was a great deal in him. It began to come out."

"That last hard week brought out a great deal. He did more for people than anybody knew; I gleaned it from people he spoke of, people he

wished to be remembered. He said his money would do more good in Dr. Provost's hands than if he had lived to spend it. He loved you."

"I know he did."

Tears were near, but she kept them back.

"Do you think you would have married him?"

"No."

"How do you know you wouldn't?"

"Perhaps I do not know. I never can know now. If I made a mistake, I do not know it. Perhaps we never do know in the present life a mistake like that. If I hurt him, God could heal him."

"I thought you cared for him—as he wanted you to. You were so gentle with him."

"Was I? Can you say that? How I have suffered because I was so hard! That last talk breaks my heart; I cannot think of it."

"He told me; he said it was good for him coming from you, who were so gentle. He kept you away from him, he said you would suffer too much when he suffered. He said he was glad that he loved you; it was longer than you knew, when he looked back it was longer than he knew.

His mother was not to him what she must wish she had been. Arthur was her favorite."

"Yes," said Olive.

It was hard to talk. It was hard to listen.

"I think he hoped—he hoped for his life, he hoped for you."

She crushed the mint in her fingers and did not speak.

"I read to him when he asked me; he only said: 'Read about Him.'"

Tears were choking her; they fell, dropping on the crushed mint.

"It almost seems—sometimes—as if our life were in our own hands; more than once, moved by irresistible compassion, I was at his door to go in and tell him that I would love him all I could, and help him to be strong. I thought it might be what God meant. I do not know what kept me back. I think I was willing, if God chose it for me."

"Doesn't the love He gives show what He chooses for us?"

"I don't know. It did not for Andrew. It did not show that I was chosen for him. The love was chosen, I must believe that; that had its work to do. But I had no work to do, else it would

have been given me, and I should have done it. I know I should, God could have made me willing, and He did not. Love is a most purifying fire."

He said "Yes," and paused.

Would they have talked like this fifteen years ago? Had they not had lessons to be learned apart?

"A letter came from Germany yesterday. She has married her cousin. She still steps a little way every day. She is very happy. I was weak; I see clearly now; I could not allow such a thing to happen now. If it were only my hurt, but it was hers, poor child! No wonder she is glad to have some one show her a little natural feeling."

"When you are cold, you can be very cold."

"Perhaps the reverse is true."

"Naturally."

"Shall we walk on? I am keeping you out in the chill air. How long can you stay with my aunt?"

"Leila does not urge, but she speaks of Monday. Mrs. Croft will be with them this winter; Leila dreads the care of her; she does not know how to be deprived of society, and society will expect her

to keep herself secluded. Dr. Provost has his friends, but that is not society.

"So she will be added to your list of cares."

"I am glad of that, if she will only take me. I am glad that somebody new is always being given to me; life would be dreary without it. I learned it in a few hours yesterday—I was homesick."

"Are you homesick now?"

"No—not just now."

"Will you be—pretty soon?"

"I shall be asleep pretty soon."

"Will you awake homesick?"

"No; for I am going home Monday."

He laughed and drew her arm within his.

"I will not let you go. I will hold you fast until you tell me something."

"How do you know that I know it?"

"Then you never will know it. Tell me what made you homesick yesterday."

"I did not dissect myself. That is girlish; I have given it up."

"Then you know without it."

"I don't have to know," she said, wilfully.

"But I do."

"Then find out."

"I am trying to—very unsuccessfully."

"You may better give it up. There is Jane at the gate. We are very selfish."

"Olive, will you tell me?"

"You don't deserve to know unless you can discover it yourself."

"May I put it to myself as I wish?"

"Yes," with hesitation.

"May I say that it was because you missed somebody who was here with you fifteen years ago?"

"Yes, that is true."

"But you would not have missed me then."

"Yes, I should."

"Like this—yesterday."

"Oh, no, no," she answered, earnestly.

"Olive, dear, by and by, when I have a home for you, will you come and be my house-keeper?"

It was queer that she could not speak; but he understood; he took her hand and held it.

And then, leaving him to talk to Jane, at the gate, she went upstairs and did not come down again that night."

She was glad, with a very solemn gladness.

She knelt down and said to the Lord: "I take it from Thee. There must be much that is hard in life for us both ; let us not for one hour lose sight of Thee, or seek the will of the other before Thy will ; keep us both, with Christ, in God."



XIX.

THE GOOD LAND.

"For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land—a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness; thou shalt not lack any thing in it. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee."

—DEUTERONOMY.

Two years afterward Olive and her husband spent the summer vacation at Diantha's. It was their honeymoon.

Dr. Provost married her in the parlor of her own house in Halsey Street, and Allan's brothers and sisters, Leila and Mollie, Hiram Anderson, and Diantha and David, with the five sisters from the old house, "stood up" with her.

Then on their wedding journey they went to Diantha's.

The changes in the two years had come so naturally that nobody knew there were any; Aunt Bet-

sey died, giving the red house and all within to Jane, and the thirty acres to Amzi, "to be made into a garden;" as for the other nephews and nieces, they might all come and stay "as long as Jane and Amzi was willing."

Finding her brother's house not as pleasant to live in as her father's had been, Abby Menzies willingly consented to become Dr. Provost's housekeeper; Letty loved the country, and Jane was lonely in the red house, so Letty went home with Jane, and "what with taking a boarder now and then and doing our own work, and being economical, we can get along," they both assured Allan, when they had decided the matter between themselves.

And then Olive could have her wish and take Miss Hannah home with her.

"I want her to have a real good time, Allan," Olive said to her husband. "I don't want to begin our married life by being selfish; and we shan't have quarrels for her to interfere in, as people do who haven't grown old in understanding each other—she'll grow young and sweet."

"I should think she would! I expect to myself," he laughed.

Hiram is still teaching the Dazey school; in vacations he becomes agent for school-books and travels through the country, "like a pedler," Diantha declares.

Leila has not yet found her vocation; she has not added to her knowledge of Esquimaux, although she has to the knowledge of several other things.

Mollie still goes about the house like a benediction; every time she receives a letter from Dazey her mother asks her to read it aloud, and Hiram is so much accustomed to it that he has fallen into the habit of writing a sheet of Dazey gossip especially for Diantha's benefit.

The old father moves about with his cane, and chops wood on his best days, and the old mother does not forget her "girls," and gives each of them her day and knits squares for counterpanes out of the balls of cotton Olive never forgets to send her; one of the wedding presents was a counterpane knitted by the grateful old fingers.

Diantha has decided that although "Cousin Olive" may not be what is called a spiritual-minded woman, she is very active in finding out what other folks like.






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